



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

**Jolly good
times at
Hackmatack**

Mary Prudence
Wells Smith

JUV 1917.42

KD 995

Harvard College
Library



FROM THE BEQUEST OF

Lucy Osgood

OF MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS



°
JOLLY GOOD TIMES

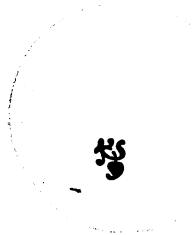
AT HACKMATACK

358 E

BY

MARY P. WELLS SMITH

AUTHOR OF "JOLLY GOOD TIMES; OR, CHILD LIFE ON A FARM," "JOLLY
GOOD TIMES AT SCHOOL," "THE BROWNS," "THEIR CANOE TRIP"



BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

1917

JUV 1917.42

✓



Lucy Osgood fund

Copyright, 1891,
BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

Printed
S. J. PARKHILL & Co., BOSTON, U.S.A.

PREFACE.

MY bright young readers will not be long in discovering that "Hackmatack" is a farming town among the hills of Western Massachusetts, and that the "jolly good times" there are identical with those "good old times" of which they have often heard; the time "when grandpa was a boy," and "when grandma was a girl,"—famous stories those, always. Not only are those days, when "plain living" if not "high thinking" were more distinctly characteristic of New England, rapidly disappearing, but so also are the elderly people who recollect them. Before these times become wholly traditional, it seems good to picture them, as vividly as may be, for the benefit of the young folks who will grow up under influences differing so widely from those that shaped the youth of

their ancestors. To bring back something of those vanished days is the aim of this story.

Should I give it a dedication, it would be to the dear and honored old friends, so many of whom have passed away within the last few years. They, and such as they, made the *old* New England the New England of glorious history and memories.

“Thanks be to God that such have been,
Although they are no more.”

M. P. W. S.

AVONDALE, CINCINNATI, O.,
June 15, 1891.

CONTENTS.



CHAPTER	PAGE
I. WHERE 'S DANIEL?	7
II. DANIEL'S EXPLOIT	15
III. MUSTER	29
IV. SUNDAY, AT CHURCH	50
V. SUNDAY, AT HOME	69
VI. IN GRANDMA'S ROOM	80
VII. GRANDPA VISITS NIAGARA	95
VIII. A BUSY MONDAY	109
IX. A WEDDING	127
X. THANKSGIVING	146
XI. THANKSGIVING EVENING	165
XII. SCHOOL BEGINS	181
XIII. THE NEW MASTER	194
XIV. A NEW WORLD	208
XV. WINTER SPORTS	227
XVI. A GREAT EVENT	250
XVII. DAN'S TRIP	262
XVIII. SIGHT-SEEING IN BOSTON	280
XIX. THE EPISODE OF SNOOZER	308
XX. SINGING-SCHOOL	323
XXI. TWO GREAT OCCASIONS	333

JOLLY GOOD TIMES AT HACKMATACK.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE 'S DANIEL?

IT was Saturday forenoon, almost dinner time. The minister was in his study, wholly lost to the things of this world, as he wrote the "and now a few words more, my dear hearers," which always cheered the younger portion of his congregation with the knowledge that the long sermon was at last nearing its end.

Suddenly the study door opens, and Grandma Strong's head is thrust in.

"Where 's Daniel, Erasmus?" she asks.

"Daniel?" asked the minister, in a bewildered way, slowly waking up from his abstraction and coming down to earth. "Oh, yes, Daniel. I saw him last at the breakfast table, I believe. I

think I recollect hearing him whistle a while ago. Perhaps Lyddy Ann or the girls will know his whereabouts." And the minister took up his quill again.

"You might as well talk to the side of the house as to Erasmus, when he is writing a sermon," muttered grandma to herself, as she went to the kitchen.

Lyddy Ann, mop in hand, was hard at work, tidying her premises for Sunday, and in no mood for trifling. She never was, on Saturdays. The pantry door, half-open, showed a shelf full of freshly baked pies, another loaded with loaves of gingerbread and cake, while a whiff of baked beans and brown bread was added to the other delicious odors that filled the kitchen, as Lyddy Ann took down the door of the brick oven to give the beans a stir.

"Where's Daniel, Lyddy Ann?" asked grandma.

"Daniel!" exclaimed Lyddy Ann, turning around with a heat-flushed face, mop in one hand, oven door in the other. "I'm sure I don't know. I have plenty to do Saturdays, I guess, without trying to keep track of that boy."

Grandma did not hear this last remark, having

already prudently closed the door. Lyddy Ann was the best of help, devoted to the Strong family, faithful, neat, industrious and quick; and on this account it was agreed to take no notice of the explosions of temper, which were not infrequent when Lyddy Ann had on a high pressure of steam, as was especially the case on Saturday. She always came out smiling and cheerful Sunday morning, and her one failing was overlooked in consideration of her many virtues.

“I do wonder where that boy can be,” said grandma, as she went towards the keeping-room.

Opening the door she caught Becky, who was supposed to be dusting the room, standing with her duster under her arm, deep in a book, so deep that she had not noticed grandma's approach.

“Rebecca Strong!” exclaimed grandma, severely. “I am surprised at you! Such shiftlessness I never saw.”

Becky hastily dropped the book, and began dusting with great energy.

“I only wanted to see how that chapter came out, grandma,” she said; “it is so interesting.”

“Humph!” said grandma. “What kind of

a woman do you suppose a little girl is going to make, that reads in the morning instead of doing her work? I do wish you were not so much like your father. One book-worm is enough in a family. Do you know where Daniel is, Becky?"

"No, ma'am. I heard him say something about going hunting."

"Perhaps he told Priscilla his plans," said grandma, going out into the front hall, and calling upstairs, —

"Priscilla!"

From above came only the sounds of a broom briskly plied (for Saturday was general cleaning day at the minister's), and a girlish voice uplifted in the exultant strains of "Coronation."

"Priscilla!" called grandma again.

"And cr-o-o-own him Lord of all!" sang the voice above, triumphantly.

Grandma mounted the stairs part-way.

"Priscilla! Priscilla Strong!"

This brought a pause in the music upstairs, and over the upper hall balustrade looked the pleasant face of a young girl, flushed with fresh air and exercise, fantastically crowned with a towel, twisted around her head turban-wise.

"What is it, grandma?"

"Have you the least idea where Daniel can be? I can't get track or trace of him. He has n't been seen since breakfast."

"Why, the last I saw of him," said Priscilla, "was right after breakfast, when I was brushing off the front steps. He was standing by the gate. I asked him if he would go over to Brush Hill this afternoon with Becky and me, for gentians. He said he would if he did n't go squirrel hunting with Cyrus Dole. I would n't worry about him, grandma; it's almost dinner time, and Dan's pretty sure to turn up at meal time."

And Priscilla went back to her broom.

"Not worry!" said grandma to herself, as she went back to the keeping-room. "Easier said than done. Some one's got to worry a good deal before that boy is brought up in the way he should go. And there's Erasmus with his nose always in a book! He would n't know if an earthquake tore up the front yard, so long's the walls did n't tumble in on him and crush him."

Still her mind was somewhat relieved by Priscilla's suggestion. But dinner time brought no Daniel.

12 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

"Blow the conch-shell out the back door, Lyddy Ann," said grandma. "I guess that will bring him."

The mellow notes of the conch-shell, vigorously blown by Lyddy Ann, resounded far and near, echoing off among the hills. They brought promptly in Erasmus, Jr., the minister's oldest son, but no Daniel appeared.

As soon as grace had been pronounced grandma asked, —

"Do you know where Daniel is, 'Rasmus?"

"I only wish I did, that's all," answered 'Rasmus, in an injured tone. "I've been out at the corn-house husking all alone all the morning, and I don't think much of it. It's just as much Dan's business to do the husking as it is mine."

Mr. Strong, being now wholly withdrawn from his books, awoke to the situation.

"Erasmus," he said, "I told your brother this morning, when he asked to go hunting this afternoon, that he might go if he husked smartly all the forenoon. Do you say that he has not husked any this morning?"

"Yes sir, I do," said Erasmus.

Mr. Strong's face darkened.

"I must say, Erasmus," said his mother, "you're a great deal too easy. You ought to look sharper after Daniel. You get absorbed in your books, and forget you have any children. I don't know what would become of them, I'm sure, if they had n't an old grandmother to follow them up."

Grandma Strong, who was a vigorous and energetic old lady, certainly had no occasion to reproach herself for neglect of duty in "following up" the children.

"I was in hopes the boys would get enough of that new corn thrashed for samp to-day," spoke up Lyddy Ann, who, being a free and independent American girl, from a good farmer's family, would have, to use her own words, "flown up" if any one had questioned her right to sit at table with the family, and be considered "as good as anybody." "I want some fresh samp before the tailoress comes. Miss Patty always says my samp beats all creation."

"Well," said 'Rasmus, "I've done my stint, and I'm going hunting myself this afternoon. If Dan comes round, you can see what you can get out of him."

"Send him directly to me in the study when

he comes," said Mr. Strong, rising from the table with a clouded brow.

"I do wish I knew where that boy is," said grandma. "I'm mortal afraid something has happened to him."

"I'll put some dinner down before the kitchen fireplace to keep warm for him," said Priscilla, who was helping clear off the table. "He will be along pretty soon."

"Dan never does know what time it is," said Becky.

"That's true," said grandma.

She took her knitting-work and sat down by the keeping-room window, where she could look up the road and watch for Daniel's coming. Let no one imagine her taking her ease in a rocking-chair. No, indeed; grandma did not approve of "lopping and lolling in rocking-chairs,"—not she. She sat very erect in a straight-backed, flag-bottomed chair, not touching the back, her feet on a little wooden cricket, while her knitting-needles clicked briskly without her even looking at them, as she scanned the road anxiously for the missing boy.

CHAPTER II.

DANIEL'S EXPLOIT.

MEANTIME, where *was* Daniel? It is safe to say that his family would have been considerably astonished could they have known his precise whereabouts while they were at the dinner table. Daniel was not disobedient. In fact, few boys were, in those days. They dared not be. He had fully intended to do the husking. But, as he started for the corn-house, a sudden thought struck him.

"I believe I'd better just run over to Cyrus's and see what time he's going to start this afternoon. It won't take more than a minute. He may think I'm not coming, and go off without me."

So Dan went whistling out the front gate, and up the road, toward the Doles'. As he neared the turnpike, his attention was attracted by seeing a great dust down the road leading to

the Centre, out of which came a loud shouting. Dan stopped to see what all the hubbub was about.

Out of the cloud of dust soon appeared a large drove of sheep and cattle, driven by a man whom Dan knew well by sight, Mr. Abner Haskins, one of the biggest drovers in the county. Every fall Mr. Haskins went about among the farmers of that section, buying their cattle to drive off to Boston market, or rather Brighton, near Boston. So Daniel knew that this drove was on its way to Brighton.

Mr. Haskins looked flushed and heated. As he came nearer, he shouted: —

“Hallo there, bub! Look sharp now! Don’t let them critters go off down that road!”

Daniel “looked sharp,” waving his cap, shouting, and jumping about with so much energy that the frightened sheep and cattle ran by him as if for their lives.

“Hold on,” cried Mr. Haskins, as he came up. “You’re overdoin’ on ’t a leetle. You seem to be a likely sort of a boy. I’m in a peck of trouble, and I want a leetle help. I’ve lost one of these pesky cows and her calf, back here a piece, and I wish you’d jest drive these

critters along on the road to North Orange, while I go back for 'em. It's a straight road, and you won't have a mite of trouble. You jest drive 'em along kinder easy like, — don't run 'em, — and I'll soon ketch up with you."

"Yes sir, I will," said Daniel, delighted with this unexpected honor and privilege.

"Here, you 'd better take my whip, I guess," said Mr. Haskins. "Now, mind you don't run 'em."

"No sir, I won't," said Dan, his eyes sparkling as he grasped the long whip. How often had he looked in admiration at Mr. Haskins going along driving his great droves, holding aloft this same long whip like a sceptre. He had always seemed a great man to Dan. And now here was Dan himself actually in the same proud position! He wished 'Rasmus, and Cyrus, and some of the other boys could see him.

"Guess they would give something for my chance," thought he.

It was really no small responsibility that had thus suddenly been thrust upon Dan. There were a hundred sheep in the drove, ten or twelve head of cattle, and several calves. The

drove filled the road for a long ways ahead. Behind it walked Dan in proud command of the whole, — a bare-foot boy of eleven, with a round, sun-burned face, and honest gray eyes. No one, seeing how small he looked as he trudged along in the dust behind the big drove, could possibly have imagined how large he felt. Whatever he lacked in size, he fully made up in “hollering.”

“Here, what are you about? Go along there! Get up!” shouted Dan, flourishing and cracking the whip till the hills and woods all about rang again. When he passed the Widow Bassett’s solitary farmhouse he did not lower his voice. One of the cattle tried to turn in at Mrs. Bassett’s big gate. This gave Dan an opportunity to run, and use the long whip, and “holler,” and show who was master. The widow’s dog came out and took a lively part in the commotion, barking himself almost asunder. Dan saw the widow and her daughter come running to the window to see what terrible thing was happening. He knew they would spend the rest of the day wondering and speculating how the minister’s boy came to be driving that great drove. But he took no notice, walking proudly

by, in Mr. Haskins' best manner, looking neither to the right nor left.

He had the good fortune to meet a boy he knew, Tertius Bigbee, who was tamely driving a load of bags to mill. Tertius turned out one side the road and stopped.

"Where are you going, Dan?" he asked. "Whose cattle are those?"

"I can't stop to talk," said Dan. "I've got this drove to take care of for Mr. Haskins." And on he went, leaving the wondering Tertius to look back after him with envy.

It was a bright September morning. The leaves were dashed here and there with brilliant reds and yellows, the sky a royal blue, the air clear and crisp with the touch left in it by the first frost, which had whitened the grass last night. The sun drew out a strong perfume from the pines, the sweet fern, the dying leaves, the long, withered dead grass in the fence corners. The ferns, bleached and yellow, leaning out over mossy green rocks, were reflected in the clear brown waters of the brook, and the golden rod nodded its yellow plumes all along the roadside. It was the kind of morning when a boy had just as soon be out walking as husk-

ing corn, especially when duty pointed plainly that way, as in Dan's case.

"The chestnut burrs will be open to-day," thought Dan, scanning some promising looking trees over the stone wall in the pasture.

But he could not leave his drove to hunt under them for the glossy nuts that he was sure were lying there, waiting for some boy to pick up. For a while he was afraid Mr. Haskins would soon come up to deprive him of his pleasure. But as time wore on, and the sun mounted higher and higher up the sky, and yet no Mr. Haskins appeared, Dan hardly knew what to do.

"I'm getting a good ways from home," he thought. "I don't know what grandma and father will say, I'm sure. But I don't see how I could say no, when Mr. Haskins was in such trouble, and only wanted me to oblige him for a few minutes. I wonder where Mr. Haskins can be? He said he'd soon catch up with me."

And Dan, who was now at the top of a long hill, looked anxiously back. He could see the narrow road with its grassy border for a long way back, winding along beside the brook, but not a living creature was there on it, — no Mr. Haskins, no cow, no calf.

"Well," thought Dan to himself, "I don't see as I can do anything else but go on. I told Mr. Haskins I would take care of his drove till he came up, and I must do it."

Fortunately for Dan, the road ran through rather a solitary region, with few side roads branching from it. When he did come to a cross road, Dan was here, there, and everywhere, all at once, shouting, waving the whip, and chasing the stragglers, until they seemed to realize there was some one considerably younger and livelier than Mr. Haskins at their heels.

Once Dan feared he was in serious trouble. There was a flock of sheep in a field ahead. One of his sheep leaped the wall to join this flock. Of course the rest of the sheep began to follow their leader, and leap the wall. But Dan also leaped it, almost as soon as they, and soon succeeded in driving his stray subjects back into the turnpike. An awful doubt, however, crossed his mind, —

"Suppose I've left one of Mr. Haskins' sheep behind in that pasture!"

He could not feel easy in his mind until he had run back and examined the strange flock. There was no sheep there marked with the

broad "H" in red chalk which all Mr. Haskins' sheep bore on their fleecy sides. Dan went on, relieved on that point, but growing more and more anxious as Mr. Haskins did not appear. The sun was now overhead. That fact, as well as Dan's appetite, indicated plainly that it was high noon. Dan drove his father so often, on exchanges or other ministerial business, that he knew all the country for miles about. He saw that he was now drawing near North Orange.

"I'll not go any farther than North Orange, anyway," he thought. "I'll get the tavern-keeper there to put the drove in his field and keep them till Mr. Haskins comes up."

All the taverns on the turnpike kept a field for the use of drovers on their way to Boston, where they could leave their cattle over night.

The North Orange tavern-keeper was standing on his piazza, when he saw coming in the distance, first a big cloud of dust, then a large drove of sheep and cattle, and finally, a boy, very red in the face, covered with dust and perspiration, bearing a whip about three times as long as himself.

"Why, bub," he exclaimed, "where are you going to with all them critters?"

"I don't know," replied Dan. "I thought perhaps I could put them in your field."

And then Dan told his story, while the thirsty sheep and cattle crowded around the watering trough on the common.

"Well, I declare, you 're a smart boy, and no mistake," said the tavern keeper, when he had heard the story. "Ain't you Priest Strong's boy? I thought so. I've seen a boy about your size driving by with him sometimes. It's this way about my field. You see it was training here last week, and they drilled in my field, and the fences are all down. So it's no sort of use turning the critters in there. They might just as well be out here on the common. Someone would have to stand right by and watch 'em."

Dan, who was in a hurry to be getting home, now hardly knew what to do. As he stood irresolute, the tavern-keeper said, —

"How much are you going to charge Haskins?"

"I thought perhaps he would pay me ten cents," said Dan.

"Ten cents? No, you must charge him a quarter. It's worth every cent of that."

To Dan's great relief, he now saw Mr. Has-

kins coming at last, driving the missing cow and calf. He looked heated and worried, and said as he came up, hat in hand, mopping his red face with his yet redder bandanna,—

“I had a tussle to get them critters again. I’d no idee they was so fur back. I had to chase all over Robin Hood’s barn after ’em.”

Then he anxiously surveyed his drove, and finding them all there, safe and sound, looked greatly relieved and pleased.

“You’ve done first rate, bub,” he said. “You’ve brought ’em through as well as I could myself. I’ve been most worried to death about ’em, I can tell you. I didn’t know how you would get along. Wa’al, how much do you call the job worth?”

“I think it’s worth a quarter,” said Dan, made bold to ask this large sum by the tavern-keeper’s advice.

“So do I, too,” said Mr. Haskins, heartily. “Here it is, and a cent extr’y besides.”

Dan felt that this was indeed generous. Seldom indeed was it that he had a whole quarter of his own. And to have a cent extra thrown in! He thanked Mr. Haskins most warmly.

"What's your name," asked Mr. Haskins.

"Daniel Strong."

"What, not Priest Strong's son? Well, I must apologize to your father next time I see him for running off with his boy in this way. You've done me a good turn, Daniel, and I sha'n't forget it."

Here the tavern-keeper, who admired Dan's enterprise in bringing the drove so far alone, came out with a liberal supply of doughnuts and cheese, and, thus fortified, Dan set out on his eight-mile walk home in the best of spirits, as he occasionally turned over the twenty-six cents in his pocket. It was going into a little tin box in his drawer, where all the pennies he earned were being saved for a purpose dear to his heart. When they amounted to a dollar his father would take it and give him his note, and pay him interest on it. When enough money was accumulated Dan meant to buy a violin. He was extremely fond of music, and felt that if he ever lived to own a violin, he should be the happiest boy in all Hackmatack.

Dan was of course able to get over the ground much faster returning than when hindered by the drove. About the middle of the

afternoon, after his grandmother had already had him dead and buried several times as the result of various accidents that she was certain had befallen him, at last she saw him coming down the road.

"I do declare!" she exclaimed. "There's that boy now! He looks all beat out, and dirty,—my, dirt's no name for it! Where under the canopy have you been, Daniel Strong, I should like to know?" she asked severely, as Dan entered the keeping-room and sank into the first chair he came to.

Dan told his story, first to her, and then to his father in the study. When Mr. Strong had heard Dan's story, he said, —

"We have suffered much anxiety on your account, my son. I do not see, however, that you are to be blamed in the matter. You could not refuse to help Mr. Haskins under the circumstances, and could not foresee this long absence from home. As you know, I always wish you to ask permission to leave home. But I shall excuse your failure to do so this time. And Erasmus may go after the cows to-night, as I presume you are tired."

Daniel felt that he had come out of it very

well indeed, as he left the study. Privately, his father was well pleased with Daniel's achievement,—felt that he had shown considerable executive ability for an eleven year old boy. But it was not the fashion of the times to spoil children by much praise.

Grandma, who felt that Daniel was almost too smart to grow up, only said, with, however, but poorly concealed satisfaction, —

“Well, well, pretty doings, I think, for a boy to march off in this way for a whole day, and frighten his old grandmother almost to death.”

But she piled Dan's plate high at the supper table with pork and beans, saying, —

“Poor boy! He's half starved.”

And after supper, when his father told him to study his Sunday-school lesson, grandma said, —

“Erasmus, the boy's clear tuckered out. He'd better wash and go right to bed, and get up early to-morrow morning and study his lesson before he goes to church.”

As every one kept Saturday night sacred, Sunday had already begun. Grandma put aside her knitting and read in the Bible. No neighbor would think of calling to-night. The children

studied their Sunday-school lessons, and took their baths, and prepared generally for Sunday.

How good the feather bed did feel to Dan that night, as he sank down into its soft depths, asleep almost as soon as he lay down. Erasmus complained the next morning, —

“I might as well have slept with old John last night as with Dan. He kicked like a horse all night long.”

“Well, I could n’t help it,” said Dan. “Those sheep kept jumping over walls all night.”

CHAPTER III.

MUSTER.

MUSTER was to be held at Northfield this year, greatly to the joy of all the Hackmatack boys, who, one and all, were highly resolved to assist on this great occasion. Ki Kellogg, Deacon Kellogg's son, came down to the minister's one evening full of exciting plans,

"If you will furnish the horse," he said to Erasmus, "I will take our two-seated wagon and we will all go together. Our horse is such a slow coach, we should n't get there till the day after, if we tried to go with that."

"Oh dear," said Dan, "I'm afraid father will not let us go."

"Of course he will," said Ki. "Why, it's going to be one of the grandest musters ever held anywhere around. General Brigham and his staff are going to be there, and there's going to be a sham fight between the Indians and the

militia; Joe Root told me so. He and Zeri Dunnell are going to be two of the Indians, and Joe wants to borrow your horse-pistol, Dan."

Dan was the proud possessor of an ancient horse-pistol with a flint-lock, as big as a small gun, a family heirloom that his Uncle Zach Bullard, his mother's brother, had lately made over to him, to his own joy and his grandmother's disgust.

"I'll lend Joe my pistol," said Dan, "if he will be very careful not to lose it. You can't buy such a pistol as that. Oh, I wonder if father will let us go!"

"I'm going right in and ask him now," said 'Rasmus, and in he went to the study, while Dan waited his return in breathless anxiety and suspense almost greater than he could bear. Hitherto he had never been permitted to go to muster because considered too young.

But Mr. Strong remembered what going to "general training" had meant to himself when a boy, and so consented to let the boys go, though saying, —

"Dan is rather too young and thoughtless to go to such a place, and I should not consent to his going if I did not rely on you, Erasmus, who are older, to look well after him."

"I will take good care of him, sir," said 'Rasmus, who enjoyed exercising an older brother's authority over Dan, though he sometimes had trouble in maintaining it.

He returned joyfully to the keeping-room, reporting his father's consent to their going, and taking the horse.

"He said you would have to mind me, Dan, and do exactly as I say, or he would n't let you go."

"Well," said Dan, "I can stand it one day, I guess, for the sake of going to muster. I say, boys, let's ask Cyrus Dole to go with us; he wants to go like everything, but has n't any way to get there."

The older boys agreed to give Cyrus the fourth seat in Ki's wagon, and Dan's joy was complete. Cyrus was a boy of his own age, and a great friend and crony of his.

Nothing but "muster" was now talked of among the boys, and the days seemed to crawl until finally they reached the important date. Ki Kellogg brought his wagon down to Mr. Strong's the night before, as they were to make an early start in the morning.

"Now don't you over-sleep, 'Rasmus," said

Ki. "We must be on the muster field bright and early, not to lose any of the fun. They call the roll at six o'clock sharp."

"You need n't worry about 'Rasmus, Ki," said Dan. "I'll have him out on time."

"Pooh," said 'Rasmus, "I think I see you! More likely I'll have to pull you out of bed by the heels."

"Not to-morrow morning," said Dan.

The boys had Lyddy Ann put up their luncheon the night before, and arranged with her to leave cold meat, bread and butter in the pantry, where they would be handy for a hasty breakfast. When they went to bed at eight, partly to hurry time along and make morning come quicker, partly because they wanted to rise so early, Dan, who was all excitement, said,—

"It's no use going to bed; I am sure I shall not sleep a wink."

But in fact he was soon sound asleep. Before long, as it seemed to him, he woke; there stood 'Rasmus in the moonlight.

"Is it time to get up?" asked Dan, hastily bounding out and seizing his trousers.

"I don't know, but I guess so," said 'Rasmus. "The moon's as light as day, so you can't tell

what time it is. Keep still, and I'll slip down into the keeping-room and look at the clock."

'Rasmus tip-toed down the back stairs in his stocking feet, the stairs, in spite of all his caution, giving forth the most unexpected and startling creaks and groans, in a fashion stairs have when you are trying to be more than usually quiet. He returned to say, —

"It's only two o'clock."

"I may as well keep on my trousers and stockings," said Dan, "now I've got them on, to save time in the morning."

They composed themselves to sleep again. Suddenly Dan awoke with a start, sure they had over-slept. This time he went down to look at the clock, and found it only three. 'Rasmus went down again at half-past three. Then they both fell fast asleep, and slept hard, until wakened by a sharp rattling sound against their window-pane. There, in the gray of the early dawn, stood Ki and Cyrus, throwing up gravel against the window to waken them.

'Rasmus opened the window cautiously, and in a stage whisper said, —

"We'll be down in a minute."

In short time he and Dan were out doors, old

John was harnessed, and the four boys were in the wagon, driving as fast as the horse could trot along the Northfield road, as happy and full of joyful excitement and anticipation as boys ever were.

A thick white frost lay on the grass, and sparkled on the stone walls, and the October air at this early hour, though deliciously pure and clear, was sharp and piercing. But the boys did not mind the cold in the least, were indeed hardly sensible of it, so absorbed were they in talk about the muster. Many wagons were travelling the same road, and now and then fast teams drove past them, making the boys feel sure they were going to be late. The sun rose brightly above Northfield mountain, and shone out over the beautiful valley, just as they drove into Northfield street.

The wide, long, grass-bordered street with its four rows of great trees arching over its whole length, its dignified looking large white houses with green blinds standing back under the trees, had never looked more lovely than on this bright October morning. The radiant colors of the trees, now in full autumn splendor, the red and yellow leaves that sailed down and check-

ered the green sward, the intense blue of the sky overhead, all the bluer from contrast with the brilliant foliage, gave the village a festival look, as if it were in gala dress, in honor of the day.

Early as it was, vehicles of all sorts were pouring into town on every road, horsemen galloped wildly to and fro under the overhanging elms, some of them in uniform, and in the distance the boys heard the thrilling notes of a fife and drum.

"Hurry up, 'Rasmus," said Ki, "we shall be late;" while Dan and Cyrus, with faster beating hearts, leaned forward on the back seat, as if by so doing they could get there sooner. Old John, however, seemed to catch the spirit of the occasion, and pranced down the street in a youthful manner not to have been expected in a horse of his discreet years. He was securely tied to a fence at a safe distance from the muster field, where a long row of other horses and wagons were already fastened.

The muster was to come off in a large field a little out of the village. It lay high, and commanded a charming view of the broad Connecticut winding between willow-fringed banks

36 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

through the green meadow below, and of the wooded hills and mountains radiant in their autumn glory, rising gloriously all around against the blue horizon. Who would n't have been a boy going to muster in Northfield such a day as this?

It was yet too early for the manœuvres to begin, although the militia men were mustering in force on the grounds. The boys, whose hastily snatched morsels of breakfast, and six-mile drive in the keen frosty air, had made their appetites unnaturally sharp, resolved to eat a part of their noon luncheon now. Delicious indeed did those broad slices of rye bread and butter and wedges of cheese taste as they ate them sitting on the top of a rail-fence, with the October sun warming their backs, while they eagerly watched and discussed each new arrival of soldiers on the field.

Suddenly came the spirited roll of a snare drum, making the boys hearts leap within them, and they saw the men falling into line.

"Come on, boys," cried 'Rasmus. "They're going to begin."

As they hurried across the field 'Rasmus struck his foot against some object. Looking

down, he saw a pocket-book lying at his feet. It wore the fat, respectable look of a pocket-book accustomed to being well-lined, never knowing the state of collapsed leanness afflicting less fortunate pocket-books.

“Well, here’s a find, I should say,” said ’Rasmus, picking it up.

It proved to be so well-lined, indeed, with good bank-bills that ’Rasmus felt it to be a responsibility to rid himself of as soon as possible.

“How shall I find the owner, I wonder?” he said.

“I should n’t wonder if it belongs to Squire Field,” said Ki. “See, he is that stout old gentleman on ahead of us, walking with Parson Holmes. His bandanna is in his hand. I don’t believe but that he pulled the pocket-book out with that. He is full of money, I’ve heard folks say.”

’Rasmus and Dan knew Mr. Holmes of New Salem well, as they did indeed all the ministers far and near. They had often put out his horse for him when he had exchanged with their father. He was chaplain of the regiment which was to drill to-day. They hurried on, and overtook the two gentlemen.

"Ah, Brother Strong's sons," said Mr. Holmes. "Good morning, Erasmus. Good morning, Daniel. Is your father here?"

"No, sir," said 'Rasmus. "We have just picked up this pocket-book, Mr. Holmes, and we thought perhaps you might know whose it is."

"Why, bless me! Bless my soul and body!" exclaimed Squire Field, starting violently, and feeling hurriedly in all his pockets. "I believe, — yes, that's my pocket-book! Well, I declare, I'm obliged to you, boys. You're nice boys, and a credit to your father, and I shall tell him so the next time he preaches in Northfield."

And opening the fat wallet, the Squire actually took out a quarter and gave Erasmus, who thanked him heartily, feeling it to be a most generous reward. A quarter did not drop into a boy's hand every day.

This adventure added to the boys' high spirits. They were now all eyes, as the field grew more animated every moment. It was a great and glorious spectacle to see the Northfield Artillery come upon the field, with colors flying, in full uniform of dark trousers with a

stripe down the side, coats trimmed with brass-bullet buttons and gold lace, and stiff, glazed, black caps adorned with a tall, black plume tipped with red, as they dashed about here and there, dragging and unlimbering their two cannon. Yes, for the first time in their lives, Dan and Cyrus saw real cannon, and heard them bang. But a still greater sight was it to behold the Greenfield Cavalry Company come dashing on the grounds, in brilliant uniform, their plumes floating out on the breeze, their horses cavorting and rearing, and dancing side-wise, and doing everything spirited and military soldiers' horses ought to do, while their manly riders sat them like statues, not one whit dismayed, perhaps now and then giving them a slight touch of the spur to make the display more spirited.

And now the militia were all drawn up in battle array, and the roll was called. There came galloping on the field several officers on horseback, — General Brigham and his staff. General Brigham was general of the brigade to which belonged the regiment under review to-day. He was quite the most imposing person the boys had ever seen, in his cocked

hat and waving plume, his great gold epaulets, and his uniform covered with gold lace. They gazed upon him in awe and wonder as the regiment marched and counter-marched before his august eye, while the Star Spangled Banner floated gloriously on the breeze, and fifes and drums played up right merrily.

There were three fifes, a bass drum, and a kettle-drum. Their notes seemed to Dan the most inspiring music he had ever heard, and his soul swelled with a general desire to fight and bleed and die for his country, as he tagged up and down after the evolutions of the militia with the others, stepping high to the music, keeping time to it, and glowing with martial fire.

"I tell you what, Cyrus," he said, "let's get up a military company right away among the boys at home. I'll be captain. I have a pistol, you know. And perhaps grandma will lend me her sword."

"That's a grand idea," said Cyrus. "Let's have a cavalry company."

But even Dan's zeal did not blind him to the fact that there might be some difficulty in inducing the fathers of the new company to consent to the use of their horses. So this

brilliant idea was reluctantly put one side, and it was resolved to be satisfied with a plain infantry company, unless indeed they could get hold of something that would represent a cannon, when they would be the "Hackmatack Flying Artillery."

At noon the regiment was drawn up in line, and the inspector went about, examining the equipment of each man, seeing if he had brought the full quota of flints, if his gun was in good order, etc. The guns were all flintlocks, and each man that went to training had to carry so many flints as part of his equipment.

At noon also Parson Holmes performed his duty as chaplain by making a long prayer, and then solemnly exhorting the men drawn up in line before him. Then there was a cessation of hostilities for an hour, while the hungry and leg-weary troops refreshed themselves with dinner.

The boys dispersed with the rest of the troops, and sought their wagon, where they revived old John's spirits with a bag of oats tied to his nose, and their own with the remains of the luncheon, which proved a mere drop in the bucket of their tremendous hunger. There

were refreshment tents on the grounds, where many of the soldiers lunched, but the boys had no money for such luxury. 'Rasmus had meant to save his quarter, to add to the sum his father held for him, as a well-regulated boy was expected to do when so large a sum fell into his possession. But in this emergency, he felt justified in saying, —

“You stay here, boys, and I'll go over to one of those tents and see what I can buy with my quarter. I am sure we never could live till we get home to-night we are so hungry now.”

The boys watched anxiously until 'Rasmus returned, bringing, to their joy, two immense sheets of baker's gingerbread, which vanished all too soon after it fell into their hands.

After dinner, the troops drilled again. Then muster wound up with the great event of the day, the sham fight with the Indians. A dozen or two young fellows were dressed to represent Indians. They wore calico shirts hanging loose outside their trousers. Their faces were stained, and long switches of horse-hair were fastened to their heads, which were further adorned with feathers, and they were armed with guns and

pistols, besides a few hatchets that did duty as tomahawks.

It was a thrilling moment when, with a terrific war-whoop, that would have done credit to the old Pequots themselves, the Indians sprang out from covert, in a spot where no one was expecting them, and, wildly brandishing their tomahawks, opened fire on the troops. The militia marched on the bloodthirsty foe undismayed, with loud answering cries of defiance, the cavalry dashed hither and thither, the cannon boomed, shaking the ground and echoing from hill to hill; there was a brisk rattling fire of muskets, the drums beat valiantly, and the smoke and smell of gunpowder filled the air. If the blood of the conflict had equalled the noise and smoke, all the brooks of Northfield would have run red with gore that day.

The Indians were crafty and artful, — a wily foe. They kept mostly under cover of the woods and bushes, making forays here and there, where least looked for, giving the soldiers the liveliest sort of work.

“Why don’t the Indians come right out and fight them?” asked Dan, impatient for more “slaughter.”

"Why, that is n't the Indian way," said 'Rasmus. "Indians always lie in ambush, you know, and fight under cover, if they can. An Indian never makes a square, open fight."

"There!" exclaimed Dan, all excitement, as the Indians suddenly made a wild sally, "there's Joe Root, now, — that big Indian that just came out from behind the maple-tree. I know that's my pistol."

"Whang!" went the pistol, and Joe sprang behind his tree again.

"What a loud noise it makes," said Cyrus. "It sounded like a gun!"

"Yes, that's a grand pistol," said Dan.

Dan and Cyrus were dissatisfied with their point of view. They wanted to be nearer.

"There's a capital place over on the rail-fence, on that hill," said Dan. "We could see the whole of it if we were only over there. Let's go over, Cyrus."

'Rasmus, who had a larger bump of caution than Dan, said, —

"You'd better not try to get across there. This is a good enough place. You might get hurt."

Just at this moment the force of the battle

swept off towards the woods, leaving it clear sailing across the field.

“Now’s our time!” shouted Dan. “Come on, Cyrus, quick!”

“Stop! Come back this minute! Remember what father said!” shouted Rasmus, but in vain. Dan was too much excited to pay any attention.

Away he and Cyrus dashed as fast as they could make their legs fly, but not half fast enough. For suddenly there was an unexpected swoop of the Indians, a backward whirl of the troops, a flank movement of the cavalry, and before they knew it, almost, the two boys were caught and surrounded in the very thick of the battle.

“Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered.”

Whichever way they turned, in wild efforts to escape, swords flashed, horses pranced, and guns banged.

To say that the boys were badly frightened is putting their state of mind very mildly. On all sides arose deafening cries of, —

“Here, what are you doing, you little fools?”

Get out of the way there!" and there were even some big swear words.

The boys, darting about like rats in a trap, felt that they would be perfectly willing to oblige every one and get out of the way as quickly as possible, if they only could. Finally, an orderly sergeant rode down upon them, and marched them off the field at the point of his sword.

"If I catch you on here again, you young rascals, I will put you both under arrest," he said angrily, as he left them.

"He won't catch me on there again in a hurry, I can tell him that," said Dan, as he and Cyrus, panting and out of breath, perched themselves on the coveted point on the rail-fence which they had undergone so much to gain.

"That's so," said Cyrus. "This is a grand place to see, but if I had known all we had to go through getting here, I would n't have started."

"'Rasmus will give it to me now," said Dan, "see if he does n't."

The boys soon forgot this unpleasant episode, however, in their absorbing interest in the battle, which raged fiercer than ever. At last, the

Indians were triumphantly surrounded and captured, and muster, alas, was over.

The companies all went marching home, and so did the boys, in a lively fashion that suited them well. Old John, whose eyes were jumping out of his head with all the gun-banging and cannon-firing he had heard, and who was restless after standing hitched all day and impatient to get home to his stable and supper, danced and pranced along the road in close imitation of the cavalry horses' best antics, making violent efforts to run whenever a wagon-load of valiant militia men who had drunk a little too much apple brandy dashed past them, roaring, —

“ We won't go home till morning,
Till daylight doth appear.”

'Rasmus wound the reins around his wrists, and sawed the bits, and held him in, making the most of his capers, enjoying hugely Ki Kellogg's admiration of old John as a horse of high spirit and much mettle.

They passed a dilapidated old wagon, in which sat a strange looking old man, with long, unkempt, gray hair, and tangled beard blowing across his breast, as he swayed back and forth

with every jolt of the wagon, while his patient, long-suffering old mare jogged on, unguided, at her own will, more able to find the way home than her master.

"That's old Si Baker," whispered 'Rasmus. "He lives over on Catamount Hill, in a little black house, all by himself. He never works, and no one knows how he manages to keep soul and body together. Miss Patty Babcock says that he dug once for Captain Kidd's money, and she says some folks do say that he has sold his soul to the devil. See, he's so drunk he can hardly sit in the wagon."

"He'll tumble out and break his neck, and pay his dues before long, I guess," said Ki.

The woods were thick and dark here each side of the narrow road, and all the boys felt relieved when old John's superior speed bore them on far past such evil company.

A little before sundown they drove into the yard at home, old John sobered now by the steady pull up hill all the way from Northfield, and the boys hungry enough "to eat this house up," as Dan told Lyddy Ann, when he went out in the kitchen to see if he could not hurry up supper.

'Rasmus did not fail to do his full duty as an older brother by faithfully reporting Dan's disobedience to his father, the tale of his danger losing none of its horrors in 'Rasmus's recital. Mr. Strong reprimanded Dan, and grandma said, —

“It's a special dispensation of Providence, I think, that you were not every one of you killed before you got home. Musters are dangerous places to go to, and what men and boys can find in them to enjoy, I don't see, for my part.”

“It must have been perfectly terrible to hear so many guns,” said Becky. “I am glad I was so far away.”

But both Dan and 'Rasmus stoutly maintained that “it had been the best time in their lives.” Directly after supper, they tumbled into bed, war-worn and weary, to dream of waving plumes, booming cannon, blood-thirsty Indians. The glories of the Northfield muster long lived in their memories, and were revived from time to time in Hackmatack Centre by the parades of the “Washington Guards,” under Captain Daniel Strong and Lieutenant Cyrus Dole.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNDAY, AT CHURCH.

SUNDAY morning every one rose as early as usual at Mr. Strong's because, though everything possible was always done on Saturday, yet much still remained to do Sunday morning before they all went to church. After breakfast and prayers, the boys had to milk the cows, feed them and the pigs and horse, and harness the horse. The girls flew about helping Lyddy Ann put the whole house in shining order. Then they all dressed for church, and sat down and studied their Sunday-school lesson, until it was time to go.

The minister disappeared in his study immediately after prayers, and was seen no more until the first stroke of the last bell, when he came forth, sermon in hand, stately, serious, in his best black suit, and rapped at his mother's door. Madam Strong, as she was called in the

parish, was a large, fine-looking old lady, of majestic presence, especially on Sunday. Her handsome black satin dress was the admiration of the parish, and it was well known that her black silk pelisse had been bought for her in Boston by her husband, before his death, six years ago. Madam Strong believed that the minister's family should keep up a certain dignity of appearance, suited to their position. To-day being a raw day in late November, she wore a black bombazine dress, the pelisse was laid aside for a wadded cloak of black cashmere with a large cape, and she carried a huge yellow muff, while a black silk poke bonnet with a high crown covered her head.

Erasmus brought old John and the chaise to the side door, and Mr. Strong and his mother got in and drove out of the yard at the discreet, dignified pace always adopted by old John on that day, he seeming well aware that it was Sunday, and that he was the minister's horse; above all, that the minister held the reins. It being only about three quarters of a mile to church, the children and Lyddy Ann usually walked.

The church stood on a high hill in the centre

of the town fronting the common. Around the common were grouped the schoolhouse, the store, the blacksmith's shop, the old tavern, and a few houses, forming the village of Hackmatack Centre. The village straggled down to the foot of the hill, where the new tavern, the Hackmatack House, had lately been built on the direct stage route to Boston. The turnpike had recently been changed. It no longer ran over the high hill-top where the Puritan fathers had planted their church, their schoolhouse, and their burying ground, but skirted its foot. In this change of the road, the minister's house, formerly on the turnpike, had been wholly left out in the cold. His was the only house on the road which ended there. The children therefore had a solitary walk for nearly half a mile, until they struck into the turnpike, near the Hackmatack House. Lyddy Ann and Priscilla had gone on earlier, because they sat in the choir, and must be in season for a rehearsal before service.

It was a gray, chilly day, with a hint of the coming winter in the raw air. The road was frozen hard as a stone, and all the little pools and puddles in between the ruts were covered

with ice. Dan and Becky stepped into as many of these pools as possible, the ice cracking and crunching under their feet like glass.

"Rasmus," said Dan, "I believe Badger's Pond will bear by to-morrow. See here."

And he stepped out on a strip of ice in a hollow by the road-side, accidently as it were taking a little slide on it.

"Well, perhaps it will," said Erasmus, "but I doubt it. It takes a big long freeze to harden Badger's Pond. But you'd better not let father see you sliding Sunday, or hear you talking about skating either."

Dan often resented the advice and superior tone of Erasmus, who was only fourteen after all, if he did feel so old. But now he knew Erasmus was right, and he hastily stepped off the ice, casting an anxious glance at the road ahead, where the old "shay" was jogging and bobbing along over the ruts of the rough, frozen road.

Erasmus and Daniel wore their last winter's suits of stout blue woollen cloth, no overcoats, but warm mittens, knit by grandma, coming well up on their wrists, and woollen caps pulled so far down on their heads that the tips of their

ears, reddened by the cold, were pushed out rather prominently. Becky's face, tingling with the cold, looked like a blooming wild rose in the depths of a brown beaver poke bonnet. Her brown eyes shone as she buried the tip of her nose in the soft fur of an old black muff she carried, a very big muff for a little girl. But Becky's small soul was puffed up with pride and joy. Few little girls had muffs of any sort.

"Boo-o-o!" she said, "how cold it is! I am so glad grandma let me carry mother's muff."

"Why, I thought that was Priscilla's muff now," said Erasmus.

"It was, but Priscilla has a new one, a real yellow-fox muff just like grandma's, because she is going away to boarding-school right after Thanksgiving. Grandma sent to Boston for it. So this is my muff now," said Becky, proudly.

"Grandma just pampers Becky because she is the youngest," said Dan. "The idea of a little girl like you carrying a muff! It makes you look like a little old woman."

"I don't care what you say, Dan Strong, so there now," said Becky, her brown eyes snapping. "You 'd be glad to carry one this minute if you dared. My fingers are as warm as toast, in it."

“There!” said Dan. “Now you have dropped your Testament! Here, give it to me. I’ll carry it for you, so you can give your whole mind to that precious muff.”

“’Sh!” said Erasmus, as they now came out on the turnpike; “folks will hear you.”

The church bell’s solemn call, ringing out on the frosty air far off over the brown hills and bare woods, now began its final tolling. All the roads leading to the Centre were alive with chaises, gigs, wagons, and people and children on foot, bending their way to the church on the hill-top. The last stragglers hurried as the bell began to toll, and the minister’s well-known chaise and old John were seen nearing the church.

“The bell sounds as if it said, ‘Come-quick, come-quick!’” said Dan.

“’Sh!” said Erasmus again. Light conversation was not favored on Sundays, and the minister’s children especially must set an example. So they walked on in silence.

On the church steps were gathered most of the young men of the congregation, as was their custom,—a custom that caused an agreeable flutter in the hearts of various young ladies, as

they dismounted from the high wagons before this admiring audience.

“Just see them fellers standin’ there starin’!” Lyddy Ann had said to Priscilla, as they mounted the church steps, with eyes modestly downcast. “I won’t take no notice of ’em. I won’t please ’em enough,” she added, giving a conscious side glance at Sam Hawks, catching his eye, and tossing her head with a blush, as she entered the church door.

In spite of this treatment from a member of the minister’s family, Sam was the first among the young men to press forward and take the minister’s horse, which he tied in a stall in one of the two long horse-sheds which stood back each side the church.

The minister and his mother exchanged dignified salutations with the people in the vestry, as they passed through into the church. Mr. Strong mounted the long flight of steps, and disappeared in the high pulpit, after seating his mother in the minister’s pew just beneath it, where she was soon joined by Dan and Becky, Erasmus going up into the boys’ pew in the gallery.

The meeting-house was a very old building,

so dilapidated as to be really uncomfortable in cold weather, and the parish had been for some years gradually working itself up to the conviction that a new church must soon be built. Some of the old people were bitterly opposed to this change. At every parish meeting regularly, for the last five years, Uncle Nahum Phinney had said,—

“None of your fashionable, new-fangled meetin’-houses for me. The house of God that my forefathers built, and where they worshipped, is good enough for me. There’ll never be any place to me like the old meetin’ house.”

And Uncle Nahum always had a good following. But the discomforts of the old church had finally become too great for endurance, and at the last parish meeting a vote had been triumphantly carried, to tear down the old house and build a new one the following spring.

The minister’s pew was directly under the pulpit. Like all the other pews, except those for the old men each side the pulpit, it was square, with a seat going all around it. Along the top of the pews ran a railing, supported by twisted rounds. Sometimes a restless boy,

watching his opportunity, would slyly turn one of these rounds, producing, to his joy, a loud squeak that startled the whole congregation.

The children could not see their father, so far did the pulpit tower above their heads. But they had a fine view of the choir, in the end opposite the pulpit of the long gallery that ran around three sides of the church. Dan always sat in the front corner of the pew, so he could look at the singers. He was passionately fond of music, and longed for the time when he should be promoted to sing in the choir. He cheerfully endured the standing through the long prayer, the sitting through the long sermon, for the delight of hearing the singing.

The choir comprised all the young folks of the parish with the least pretensions to a voice. They were an imposing sight as they sat in the high gallery, row after row rising in tiers, one behind the other. And then to see them come into action! It was Dan's weekly pleasure. This morning Mr. Strong gave out the hymn,

“Oh, where shall rest be found,
Rest for the weary soul?
'T were vain the ocean depths to sound,
Or pierce to either pole.”

The children looked at grandma, who began to hem and clear her throat, for "Utica" was well known to be her favorite hymn.

From the gallery came a great fluttering of leaves and passing of hymn-books, and the subdued scraping of bass-viols and violins, that always thrilled Dan's soul. For the Hackmatack choir boasted two bass viols, and two violins. The choir leader, Levi Bassett, stood up, gave a wave of his hand, and up rose the great choir. Another flourish of his hand and away they all went, bass-viols, violins, flutes, voices, and all, each doing his best to out-play or out-sing the rest. The congregation joined in. From the minister's pew rose the fresh young voices of the children, and the voice of grandma, a little quavering and broken now, but full of the fervor of the heart, while, from the pulpit above, Mr. Strong's deep bass was plainly heard, even amid the volume of sound that threatened to lift the roof of the old meeting-house. Levi Bassett stood facing the choir, waved his hand up and down as he beat time, and sang loudest of all. He was a great man in Dan's eyes, and to tell the truth, in his own also.

60 *Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

Choir and congregation sat down after the hymn, a little flushed with effort, it is true, but satisfied and refreshed. Next came a long Scripture reading, and then the long prayer, during which the congregation stood. Rumors had reached Hackmatack that in "York State" people actually sat down in prayer time, but such irreverence was hardly credited. When Mr. Strong began to pray for "our nation, and its rulers," and "our law-givers," the congregation rested itself by standing on the other foot, knowing that the end was slowly drawing nigh. There were only to follow petitions for "our commonwealth" and "our own community," and all churches in general, and this church in particular, and fellow ministers, and for all cases of sickness or affliction, and finally, a personal intercession for each soul present, that the word of God might this day be blessed to its everlasting salvation.

To-day, the prayer was a little longer than usual, because before beginning it, Mr. Strong had read from a slip of paper that had been handed him, —

"John Newton and his wife desire the prayers of this church and congregation, that the recent

death of their child may be sanctified to their spiritual and lasting good." So a special petition had been added to the usual prayer.

At its end the pew-seats (which were on hinges, and were turned up when the congregation stood) went down all over the house with a grand bang, the small boys glorying at this one good chance to let themselves out. After another hymn every one settled down for the sermon.

Becky and Dan listened sharply to the text, and repeated over and over, "Second Corinthians, twelfth, ninth," as their father often asked them for the text at night.

"Father is always sure to come down on us for the text," Dan said, "if I have forgotten it."

The children's minds wandered, the text once fixed in their heads. The sermon was, in more senses than one, over their heads. The church was cold, in spite of a stove which, after bitter opposition, had been put in a few years ago. It was a big sheet-iron affair, that stood under the gallery in the rear. From it, a long, rickety pipe straggled across the whole length of the church, with little tin pans fastened under the joints to catch the sooty drippings. But noth-

ing prevented the smoke from oozing out these same loose joints, until every one's eyes smarted.

The cold, bleak wind blew in at all the cracks, and rattled the windows violently, quite overpowering any possible warmth from the stove. In addition to the rattling of the windows, from all over the house came a subdued clicking of shoes, and rapping of feet together, as the chilled congregation tried to restore its circulation. But Mr. Strong was used to this, and had a strong voice, luckily, so he only raised it a little, and went calmly on.

Becky almost forgot her cold feet, in the novel luxury of her muff. She loved cats. In her mind, she played that the muff was a real pussy cat, and stroked and petted it, even purring softly for it, keeping one eye on grandma.

Dan swung his feet, and thumped them together, and buried his hands in his pocket, and wished grandma had brought her foot-stove. She often pushed it along for the children's use. But grandma would n't think of carrying her foot-stove in November.

Suddenly Dan caught a glimpse of Ki Kellogg leaning over from the boys' pew in the gallery. Dan thought, if he could n't sit in the choir, his

father might at least let him sit in the boys' pew. No doubt the boys were having some quiet fun up there, in spite of Abner Plunkett, the tithing-man.

The office of tithing-man was dying out in Massachusetts. At the last town-meeting in Hackmatack, Abner Plunkett had been appointed tithing-man, partly as a joke. But Abner was disposed to take this dignity quite seriously, and make the most of it. Now, suddenly, the congregation was startled by a loud rapping from the gallery. Every one looked around. There was Abner Plunkett standing up, rapping hard on his hymn-book, and pointing sternly at the boys' pew. Mr. Strong stopped preaching, and looked severely at the boys in the gallery. There was an awful pause.

"You could have heard a pin drop, anywhere in that meetin'-house," said Lyddy Ann afterward, describing the scene to Miss Patty Babcock who, unluckily, was kept at home that day by sickness. "Them boys, I tell you they was scared! They curled down, and looked as if they wanted the gallery floor to open and swallow 'em up."

"I would n't be in Ki Kellogg's shoes now

for a good deal," thought Dan. "What if father should speak to him!"

Dan well remembered once hearing his father speak to a boy in church. "My son, my son, are you aware that you are desecrating the house of God?" Mr. Strong had said, pointing sternly at the withered offender. But to-day he contented himself with the awful pause, and then resumed his discourse to a much more wide-awake audience, interrupted by no further disturbance from the boys, who sat more quiet than mice, by far.

Erasmus knew that his father would call him to account.

"But I did n't do anything," he thought. "I could n't help looking when Ki held that Jacob's Ladder right out under my eyes. I wonder where he got it? Perhaps I can get him to trade it for my other ball."

At the close of the morning service Mr. Strong announced that, "with the Divine permission, this discourse will be concluded in the afternoon." The congregation remained respectfully standing while he descended from the pulpit, took his mother on his arm, and the two walked in stately fashion down the

broad aisle. Not until they had reached the door did the people follow.

At noon the children attended Sunday-school, while most of their elders stood in the vestry or around the stove, refreshing themselves with scant luncheons of crackers and caraway-seed cookies from brown-paper parcels. Some of the men stood out under the horse-sheds, discussing, it is to be feared, such worldly topics as the price of produce in Boston, and the like; while the young folks were mightily interested in the notice-board, outside the church, on which a paper declared that "Orrin Plunkett and Melvina Bates intend marriage."

Once only, when very little, had Dan heard a couple "called in meeting." Jotham Bemis, the town clerk, stood up in meeting, and in a stentorian voice proclaimed,—

"O yes! O yes! Abraham Stebbins and Sarah Stearns intend marriage."

The notice-board was considered much less formidable than "being called," yet bashful couples generally absented themselves from church the first Sunday their names graced the board.

At the close of the afternoon service, there

was an expectant pause. All knew what was coming. With an impressiveness befitting the occasion, Mr. Strong unfolded a broad and long sheet, printed in big black letters, and read the Thanksgiving proclamation, ending solemnly,

“ Given at the Council Chamber this — day of November, 18—. Levi Lincoln, Governor. Edward D. Bangs, Secretary. God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

Dan and Becky could hardly help smiling right out at each other if it was in meeting. Thanksgiving! oh, what joy in the very word!

The service ended at half-past two, and there was much hand-shaking and inquiring what friends were expected home to keep Thanksgiving, as the congregation crowded out on the steps, and waited for the boys to bring up the horses.

The horses were cold, tired of standing, and impatient to get home; and the boys touched them up a little, to get all the speed and prance possible out of them; so it was an animated scene, as chaises and wagons dashed around the corner and up to the steps, the horses with heads and ears up, tightly held in by the boys,

prancing and curvetting in a lively fashion that terrified all the timid old ladies and delighted the boys. Erasmus, and some of the other older boys prided themselves on being able to round up to the steps with what they called a "stage wheel." The stage-coach having a door on only one side, its driver, when he dashed up to the tavern, executed a sweeping wheel while in full trot, in order to bring this door on the side toward the tavern. To execute a wheel like that was the ambition of every boy in Hackmatack.

It worried grandma. She often said, "I do wish, 'Rasmus, you would give up that stage wheel. I expect every Sunday to hear the whipple-tree snap, or the thills crack, or to see the chaise go over. I think it's a bad example for a minister's son to set."

But the minister rather winked at this performance, being, in truth, fond of a good horse himself.

The people who had old, slow horses, always waited, letting the faster steeds get off first. Who can tell the sufferings of Ki Kellogg, Deacon Kellogg's son, whose father drove an old pumpkin-colored horse, the most moderate

steed in town? After all the display of horse-flesh before the meeting-house was over, it was Ki's doom to come crawling around the corner, driving what he inwardly called "that old yellow plug," and to poke slowly away, seeing his friends already disappearing far in the distance in every direction. Ki's soul burned within him, and he secretly vowed,—

"When I'm grown up, I'll have the fastest horse in the county, black as jet, not a white hair on him,— a regular snorter; and I'll dash up to the meeting-house door first of any one, and he'll stand right up on his hind legs, but I'll just yank him down, and away we'll go, shooting down the road fast as lightning."

In this vision he found comfort, as the yellow horse jogged, jogged along, and his father asked, "What was Abner Plunkett rapping for? I hope, Hilkieh, you were not cutting up."

"Oh," said Ki, "Abner's always making a fuss about nothing. He is so full of his own importance he wants to make the most of it."

And his father fell to discussing with his wife some abstruse doctrinal points in the discourse, and forgot to press his queries further.

CHAPTER V.

SUNDAY, AT HOME.

AS soon as possible after arriving home from church a warm meal was served, a sort of compromise between dinner and supper. To say that the children were hungry but feebly describes their condition of famine. Not only meat and potatoes, but a large part of Lyddy Ann's Saturday baking disappeared like magic before their onset. Supper over, their father said, —

“Children, come into my study now, and learn your Sunday-school lessons for next Sunday.”

The Sunday-school lessons were long and hard, and the minister's children, above all, must know them perfectly. They were obliged to commit to memory long passages of Scripture, perhaps twenty verses, or learn a few pages in “Allen's Questions,” having all the Bible references by heart.

After they had mastered the lessons, with some help from their father on hard points, he said, "Becky, go call your grandmother and Lyddy Ann. It's time for our reading."

"I'll go, father," said Dan, eagerly seizing any chance to stretch his legs, weary with prolonged sitting.

"Very well. Becky, you may get the Bibles, and call Lyddy Ann, while Dan goes for his grandmother."

As Dan went across the front hall to his grandmother's room, he lingered, as he often did, to look at his mother's paintings. Dan's mother was dead. He and Becky could but faintly remember her. An oil painting of her, executed by a travelling artist, hung in his father's study, opposite one of Mr. Strong himself looking every inch the minister, with his finger in between the leaves of Belsham's Commentaries, as one could plainly read on the back of the book.

The painting represented Dan's mother as a slender, delicate woman, with eager, brown eyes like Becky's, her luxuriant brown hair nearly concealed under a big ruffled cap such as custom then required all women over thirty to wear.

She was Remember Bullard. Grandma Bullard, her mother, was one of the hardest working, most driving, capable women in town. She was a Worthington, and not only brought a handsome sum of money into the Bullard family, but had added more to it yearly by her industry, her economy, her skill in managing. No daughter of hers was allowed to eat the bread of idleness.

Remember was taught to bake, to brew, to sew, to weave, to spin. But somehow Remember was different from the other children. An artistic tendency cropped out in her, whence coming no one could imagine, as no such symptoms had ever been manifested before, either among the Bullards or Worthingtons.

Grandma Bullard was half-pleased at it, half-annoyed. She often scolded Remember soundly for "wasting so much time, putterin' over those silly paintings. You 'd a good deal better be spinnin' and gettin' a good settin'-out of sheets and table-cloths laid up, against you get married."

At the same time, she liked to show her daughter's pictures to visitors, in a half-apologetic way: —

“Here’s some of Remember’s nonsense perhaps you’d like to see. She wastes lots of time over them, but folks seem to think they’re sort o’ pretty. I must say that rose does look real natural, so red, and the leaves such a bright green, and that bud standing out just like life; and this horn of plenty with the fruits just dropping out of it,—seems as if you could pick them up. But I don’t know; I reckon it’s a kind of foolishness myself.”

Remember made the most of any snatches of time she could steal, and of any opportunities fate threw in her way to learn;—few and poor enough they were. When she had married the minister every one had felt it a suitable match.

“Remember Bullard would n’t have made much of a farmer’s wife, I guess. It’s lucky she got the minister. And the Bullard money will come in real handy for him.”

In short, Remember always labored under the dreadful suspicion of not being “practical.” Perhaps the effort to live down this suspicion was the cause of her death at the early age of thirty-five. She bore her children, and reared them carefully, was an excellent housekeeper, as even the most captious critics were forced

to admit, was faithful to all home and parish duties, and over and above all, managed to find some fragments of time to satisfy her cravings for the beautiful.

She had painted the walls of the front hall with a landscape of her own designing. Probably this decoration would make but a poor show in modern eyes; but then the work of the minister's wife was the wonder and admiration of not only the whole parish, but even of strangers from a distance, who came to ask permission to gaze upon this far-famed work of art.

Dan and Becky spent hours looking at these pictures. The vistas of the wonderful landscape, where palms and pines throve together, the winding stream with its boats and bridges, the romantic castles on its banks, the blue sky, where white clouds floated and birds flew over, — all opened up a wide field for their imaginations. It gave them, too, a strong, proud love for the mother who had faded away so early out of their young lives.

Becky liked best the figure of a little girl swinging under some trees, but Dan preferred a boy driving a flock of sheep, and some pigs feeding in one corner. Dan could not pass his

favorite boy to-night without stopping to look at him.

"I do wish," he thought, "that I could look over that hill where the road runs, and see where he's going to. There's a church steeple sticking up, and I know there's a village over there. Anything might be over that hill."

Here his father opened the study door.

"Daniel, we are all waiting," he said, and Dan hastened on to call his grandmother.

The family, being all assembled in the study, read aloud two long chapters in the Bible, each reading two verses in turn. They read the Bible through in course this way, one chapter each evening, and two or three on Sunday. The reading ended, Mr. Strong took down the commentaries of Belsham and Kendrick, and read aloud the comments therein on the chapters just read, with many learned explanations of his own.

Oh, how tired the children were! They ached all over, and were full of suppressed twists and wriggles. Complaint would have been worse than useless, as they well knew, so they made the best of it. Priscilla sat with a sweet expres-

sion, apparently listening closely to her father, but Dan's quick eye detected her once in a faint smile, that could hardly have been caused by the remarks of her father, who was struggling with Paul and Kendrick over a knotty point of doctrine.

"Look at 'Scilla," whispered Dan, nudging 'Rasmus. "She pretends she's listening, but I'll bet a ninepence she's thinking about her new brown alpine dress."

"Daniel," said his father, in an awful tone, "were you whispering?"

"Yes, sir," said Dan, mentally adding, "Father always sees you when you think he's not looking."

"Your levity causes me great concern, and must be checked," said Mr. Strong. "You may commit to memory a page of the Latin *Accidence* to-morrow, to recite to me to-morrow evening, when I will talk with you farther."

"Yes, sir," said Daniel, inwardly berating himself for not having kept still, and so avoided this calamity.

Becky, who, sitting before the fire, had been furtively stroking a large black cat, with snowy white neck and paws, that sat by her, solemnly

gazing into the fire as if he felt the full meaning of the day, hastened to straighten herself in her chair, fold her hands, and listen hard, lest she fall into like condemnation with Dan.

At last the welcome shades of evening began to gather, and Mr. Strong was forced to close the Commentary.

“Boys,” he said, “change your clothes now, and do the milking before dark.”

The boys joyfully hastened to obey. In summer, they always had the agreeable diversion, Sunday nights, of going after the cows, over to the “woods pasture,”—a diversion often unduly prolonged. The cows, somehow, although they were a minister’s cows, were never so apt to be lost in the depths of the woods as on Sunday nights. But now the pastures were brown and bare, and the cows were housed in the barn for the winter. But even plain milking, and chores generally, were a relief after Belsham’s Commentary.

If the long pent-up boys frisked a little at the barn, and let themselves out somewhat, if Dan skilfully stuck his foot out and tripped ’Rasmus up, sending him headlong on his nose, his milk pail flying half-way across the barn-floor; and if

'Rasmus rose up like that giant of old who gained new strength every time he touched the ground, and seizing the laughing Daniel, threw him over into the horse-manger, burying him in hay, who was the worse for it? Certainly not the boys, who did not mention these little episodes when they came in from the barn, looking rosy and bright and generally refreshed.

True, Lyddy Ann scolded them when they appeared a little late with the milk. Lyddy Ann wore a big blue apron to protect her best dress, and was flying around in an excited manner.

"I do wish you boys would quit your foolin' Sunday nights and hurry up the milkin'. I want to get my work out of the way, and my kitchen tidied up sometime before midnight. I'll tell your father of your goin's on, sure's I'm alive, if you don't quit it, see if I don't."

"Seems to me you've a new kink on your hair to-night, Lyddy Ann," said Erasmus in a teasing tone. "And—oh, my! Do see that bow of red ribbon on her neck! I guess Lyddy Ann's expecting company to-night."

"She's expecting Sam Hawks to sit up with her," said Dan.

"Now you git right out of here this minute, Dan Strong, or I'll take the broom-stick to you," said Lyddy Ann, with a flushed face, but not so terribly displeased as she pretended.

The sun had now set, and Sunday was over. Faces shortened, and there was a sense of relief among the younger members of the family. Priscilla lighted the long candles in the best brass candle-sticks, and told Erasmus to put another log of wood on the fire, and Daniel to fill up the wood-box in the little side entry. There were usually callers at the minister's Sunday evening.

Becky, who had longed to go out to the barn with the boys, but had known it would be useless to ask, now said, "Grandma, may I come in your room and pop some corn?"

"Yes, child," said grandma, graciously.

Erasmus had his father's permission to spend the evening at Deacon Kellogg's, and took his ball in his pocket to try to trade with Ki for the too fascinating Jacob's ladder.

"I'll come in grandma's room and shell the corn for you, Becky," said Dan.

"Oh, do," said Becky. "And won't you take the popper and the pan in for me, Dan? I have

the bag of corn and Snoozer to carry," she said, lifting and tugging the big black cat, until he was mounted over her shoulder, looking a heavy load for the little girl.

"What, does that old cat have to go too?" asked Dan.

"Of course he does. He likes pop-corn as well as any one. And he always loves to be in grandma's room. It is so peaceful in there it just suits him. Yes, you shall go, Snoozer, you dear angelic cat, so you shall."

Snoozer received this compliment blandly, and the little procession headed for grandma's room along the painted hall, whose tropical landscapes contrasted strangely with its arctic temperature, it being unwarmed, and the children's breath rising visibly in it.

"We look as if we were going to St. Ives," said Becky.

" 'Kits, cats, sacks, and wives,
How many were going to St. Ives? ' "

CHAPTER VI.

IN GRANDMA'S ROOM.

THE children always loved to visit grandma's room, not only because grandma herself was the best of company, especially if they could get her started story telling, but also because there was such an atmosphere of comfort and peace in there. Grandma's room was a front room one side of the painted hall. Big logs of wood were blazing cheerfully in the black fire-frame that projected from the fireplace, bringing the fire out farther into the room.

Grandma had not yet lighted her candle. So the firelight had things all its own way, and sent rosy lights and mysterious shadows flickering all over the room, on the ceiling, over the four-poster bedstead with its high feather bed and dimity hangings and valance, looking like a cosy tent, into the mirror with its gilt frame,

over which nodded a bunch of peacock feathers, into the gleaming brass andirons. Everything was so bright and gay that even the straight-backed chairs seemed to stir a little, as if about to lift their heavy square legs and step out in a stately minuet.

"Oh, please don't light the candle yet," said Becky, as grandma took the candle and bent over the fire. "It's so pleasant in the firelight."

"I don't know as I can see to pick up my stitches if I don't," said grandma, as she seated herself in her black wooden rocking-chair with its patch-work cushion, and took up her knitting.

"Never mind about the knitting, grandma," said Dan. "Let's have some stories."

"It's all very well to say, 'never mind about the knitting.' But I can tell you, Daniel, a boy that goes through his socks and mittens as fast as you do keeps some one's fingers going. You and 'Rasmus and Becky keep your Grandma Bullard and I both in work. Besides, I can talk better when I'm knitting. Well, what story do you want to hear to-night?"

In one corner of grandma's room stood a high chest of drawers. It was painted black,

and stood up high on slender legs, with a pointed top ending in spindling pinnacles that nearly touched the ceiling. In a niche one side the top, stood a large, old-fashioned beaver hat. It was Grandpa Strong's Sunday hat. Grandpa had been a minister too. He had always kept his beaver hat on top the chest of drawers, and there it still stood. It looked just like grandpa, and made grandma feel almost as if he might be coming in soon.

Becky's eye fell on the old hat, as the fire-light glanced in that corner, then left it hid in shadow again.

"Tell us some stories about what grandpa did when he was young," said Becky.

"Yes, I like to hear about that," said Dan.

"Well, I will," said grandma, well content. "Your grandfather had a pretty hard time when he was a boy. The country was new and poor, and money and pretty much everything else was scarce, and boys had to go to work as soon as they were big enough. School was only kept a few weeks in the winter, and not much was taught then. The scholars were put through Dilworth's Spelling-book, and taught to read in the Psalter, and that was about all."

"My, I wish I had lived then!" Dan could not help exclaiming.

"Your grandfather was a natural bookworm, born with a real craving for books and learning. But few books or chances to learn came in his way. He used to carry a piece of chalk in his pocket when he was at work on the farm, and if he had a spare minute, do sums on a log or bit of bark, or even on his axe when he was chopping. I guess, Daniel, you don't know many boys now-a-days that steal chances to cipher, do you?"

"Humph, I should say not," said Daniel.

"Boys are spoiled now," said grandma. "They have too easy a time."

"You're not a boy, grandma, and so you don't know. I think boys have a pretty hard time of it now," said Dan, in a grieved tone, that made grandma laugh till her sides shook. Then she went on with her story:—

"One day, somewhere, your grandfather came upon a Latin grammar. It stirred him up wonderfully. All of the minister blood of his ancestors seemed to rise up in him at sight of the book. You know, Daniel, your ancestors have mostly been ministers, way back to the first

one that came to this country in old Puritan times."

"Yes ma'am," said Dan, to whom his ancestry was an oft told tale.

"Well, your grandfather resolved, then and there, that he would study Latin sometime, and have a college education. He was sixteen then. But at that time the Revolutionary war broke out, and he went as a soldier in my father's regiment."

"Oh!" exclaimed Becky, scenting a possible glimpse of romance, "did you know grandpa then?"

"Yes," said grandma, looking pensively into the glowing bed of live coals Dan had just raked out from under the back log, "yes, we knew each other well. You children can't imagine what it was to live in those days, and see your friends all going off to the war, expecting likely you'd never see them again. And it seemed such a hopeless struggle, — the British were so strong and powerful. They were a great nation, with plenty of money and men, and supplies, and ships of war. And we were so few, and scattered, and poor. But I can tell you one thing," said grandma, the spirit of '76 flashing

behind her glasses, as she straightened herself in her chair, and gave an emphatic nod, "we were *grit* to the back-bone. We all felt, 'give us liberty or death,'— the women as much as the men."

"I don't see what the women had to do about it," said Becky.

"The women had the hardest part to bear, I might almost say," said grandma. "Take our family, for instance. After the battle of Lexington men rode express, as fast as horses could gallop, all over the land, carrying the news. My brother Noah was a minute man, so of course he started right off."

"What was a minute man?" asked Becky.

"Pshaw, don't you know that?" said Dan. "Why, the minute men carried their guns with them, to work and everywhere, and they started off the minute they were summoned, dropping their axes or ploughs or whatever they were doing, right on the spot. That is why they were called minute men."

"Noah went off into camp at Cambridge," continued grandma, "in Capt. Agrippa Wells's company. After a while came news that Burgoyne was marching down from Canada, with a

horde of Canadians, Hessians, and worst of all, Indians. Yes, the British were actually going to set those cruel savages on us! They were aiming at Bennington, to capture our supplies, which were stored there. Men came riding express again, calling the people to rally, and drive the enemy back. My father was colonel of the regiment raised in our county, and your grandfather, a boy of sixteen, went as a private in father's regiment. Those were exciting times, I can tell you. The men hurried away, right off their farms just as they were, taking their own guns and provisions. They had no uniforms, and not two guns alike. But they loved their country and freedom, and were ready to fight to the death. And we all felt that the Lord was on our side.

“Father's and Noah's going to the war left only women and children at home to carry on the farm. My mother and we girls had to go out into the fields and work with the boys. The crops must be sowed, and tended and harvested, or we should all starve. It was Hobson's choice. All the time we felt so anxious too. We did n't know what might come next. We were n't far from the Canada line here in North-

ern Massachusetts. In the Connecticut Valley we knew only too well what Indian fighting meant. Now the British had hired the Indians to fight for them, we lived in dread of those savages coming down on us, and the men all gone. Many a night I've waked up, my heart standing still within me, thinking I heard an Indian war-whoop."

"What was it?" asked Becky, her eyes big with fright and interest.

"Owls hooting in the woods all around, I suppose," said grandma. "Then Brother Noah died in camp in Cambridge. Poor boy! He was only twenty-two, as slim and straight and tall as a young sapling, with such flashing blue eyes, and so full of fire and spirit. He went off in such good spirits, burning to fight the Britishers."

"What made him die?" asked Dan, disappointed that Great-uncle Noah had no chance at the fighting.

"He was killed by exposure and hardship, I suppose," said grandma. "Our soldiers didn't have uniforms, or tents, or any of the necessities, hardly, — let alone comforts. Noah and the rest had to lie on the cold ground nights, with-

out any blankets, in a kind of hut of brushwood that he and some of the other boys built themselves, — not much protection against the damp night air. And so Noah took the fever and died. He was buried there in Cambridge with regimental honors, so Capt. Wells wrote home to us. But we didn't get the letter till long after he was dead and buried. We didn't get it till after we knew a great battle had been fought. There we were worrying for fear he might have been hurt or killed in that battle, when he had been dead nearly a month."

"What battle was that?" asked Becky.

"Bunker's Hill."

"But how did you know a battle had been fought?" asked Dan.

"We heard it. We were all over on Grinnell's Hill at work. My little brother William threw himself down on the ground a minute. Suddenly he sprang up, crying, 'Mother! I hear cannon!' Then we all put our ears to the ground, and sure enough, we could hear, or rather feel the jarring of those cannon, ninety miles away. Then we knew a great battle was going on near Boston, and you may imagine how anxious we felt. Noah's death was an

awful blow to Sister Patience. There was only a year's difference between them, and they set all the world by one another. She died about a year after he did."

"I should have thought your mother would have felt the worst of any one," said Becky.

"She felt badly enough," said grandma; "but women were made of strong stuff in those days. They had to be strong and brave, to bear and do their part. Mother knew she had to be father and mother both to us, and stand at her post, and keep everything going on right, while father was away. But Noah's death made us feel more anxious about father, and many and many's the night I've lain awake, wondering whether I should ever see your grandfather again. We seldom heard from them; never, unless they had a chance to send a letter by some one coming our way."

"Were your father and grandpa in the battle of Bennington?" asked Dan.

"No. They made a forced march, right through the woods, across country, as fast as possible. But the battle was just over when they got there. They saw a lot of the Hessian prisoners in the Bennington meeting-house,

where they were confined. But father's regiment was in all the fighting along the Hudson, at Ticonderoga, Bemis Heights, and Stillwater. And they were at the surrender of Burgoyne. That was a great day for us. We could hardly be thankful enough when we heard of that. Burgoyne meant to go down the Hudson and meet Sir Henry Clinton, who was coming up from New York. If he had succeeded, New England would have been cut off from the rest of the country, and at the mercy of their Indians and Hessians, and no one knows what we should have suffered. It would have been the death of our cause, too. But God was on our side and we prevailed."

"Did grandpa see Burgoyne?" asked Dan.

"Yes, he saw him when his troops marched through the American camp. His troops, in their handsome uniforms, were a great contrast to our boys, in their ragged clothes. One of the Hessians wrote a history of the war afterwards. There's a passage from his work quoted in a book in your father's library. He describes the American soldiers as they looked to him at the time of Burgoyne's surrender. I've read it so many times I know the

passage by heart. I always feel it exactly pictures your grandfather and my brother Noah. He says: 'The lads that stood there in rank and file, kind nature had formed so trim, so slender, so nervous, that it was a pleasure to look at them, and we were all surprised at the sight of such a handsome, well-formed race.'

"Was grandpa ever wounded?"

"No, but he would have been once, or killed more likely, but for a pine-tree. The British were raining bullets thick as hail down on our men from behind their fortifications. Our boys were pressing up, trying to drive them out, and take their works. The boys got behind trees, and shot out around them, and so worked their way along up towards the fort. Your grandfather heard more than one bullet that he knew was meant for him plunge into a pine-tree that he stood behind. Fifty years afterwards, when he was towards seventy years old, he visited the old battle-field with a friend. There he found the same pine-tree still standing. He wrote some verses about it after he came home, that were printed in the Greenfield paper. I remember the first verse: —

"Hail, grateful pine ! Me didst thou shield
 In battle from the missive ball ;
 While with the army in this field,
 I saw proud heroes round me fall.
 Mid winds and storms and whistling balls
 Unshaken thou hast stood,
 And cannon thundering like the falls
 Of Niagara's flood.'

By the way, your grandfather went to Niagara when few white folks had seen it. But I'll tell you about that another time."

The corn had been popping briskly all this time over the glowing hot coals, exploding like American musket-balls banging away at the red-coats, Dan thought, and there was a tempting white pile of it in the pan. Dan crammed a large handful in his mouth, without waiting to be invited by Becky.

"Grandma!" said Becky, in alarm. "Won't you make Dan stop? That's the second great handful he's taken. He'll eat it all up. I want to get the pan full, and then pass it all around."

"I shelled it all," said Dan, in tones muffled by pop-corn.

"Well, well," said grandma, "don't pester your sister. Wait till it's done, if she wants you to."

"How long was grandpa in the war?" asked Dan, anxious to change the subject.

"Three years. He had never forgotten or given up his determination to have an education, so now he went at it in earnest. He had to buy his time of his father till he was twenty-one. His folks were Baptists, and in those days the Baptists were opposed to 'college larnin'.' They used to tell him he wanted to go to college to learn that 'r-e-a-d' spells 'preach.' They thought preaching was a gift that came by nature. So he had his own way to make alone."

"The first thing he did was to buy a piece of land on credit. He had the good luck (brought about by his own hard work, mind you, as most 'luck' is, in my opinion) to raise such a fine crop on it that it paid for the land. Soon after he had a chance to sell the land at a big advance. He fitted for college with our minister, teaching school in the winter and working on farms in the summer, while he was studying. Some boys are not willing to go to school when they can without any trouble," said grandma, here looking over her glasses at Dan, who hitched about uneasily on his little wooden cricket, but thought best not to say anything.

“It was a hard struggle for him,” continued grandma, “but he worked his way through college at last, and fitted for the ministry, and in 1787 he was settled at Rowe, and the next year we were married.”

“Won’t you tell us about his going to Niagara Falls, grandma?” asked Becky.

“Yes. It’s a short story. You had better take the popper now, Daniel, and let Becky shell. Her face is all burnt, being close to the fire so long.”

“All right,” said Dan, taking the popper and making it fly too and fro in a lively fashion, while Becky kept a vigilant watch on the pan lest Dan make another raid on it.

CHAPTER VII.

GRANDPA VISITS NIAGARA.

HER little audience being settled again ready to listen, grandma went on with her story:

“Your grandfather was dreadful fond of natural scenery. That was one reason he always loved Rowe, it’s such a sightly place. He had heard about the wonders of Niagara, and had long wanted to go there. Hardly any white people had seen the falls then. Finally, in the summer of 1799, he made up his mind to go, and set out on horseback. I thought it was a foolish, risky undertaking, and said all I could against his going; but his mind was made up to go, and nothing could turn him. To tell the truth, your grandfather always did like a spice of risk and adventure, and being a minister, of course he did n’t often have a chance to let himself out.”

“It was an awful undertaking. York State was mostly covered with woods then. The

roads were few and poor. Part of his route lay through sixty miles of unbroken wilderness. He had to ford all the streams, there being no bridges. He carried his own provisions and feed for his horse, and camped on the ground wherever night overtook him, with no shelter from storms. Think of his sometimes travelling all day in the rain, and then lying down on the wet ground to sleep at night! I wonder now it didn't kill him. The woods were full of deer then, and Indians too."

"Oh, did he see any Indians?" cried Dan, forgetting to shake the popper in his intense interest.

"There," said Becky, "you're letting the popcorn scorch! Let me take it now."

"Oh yes, he saw plenty of Indians. I remember his telling how, one afternoon, he was picking his way along through the woods. Night was coming on, and it was growing duskish in the woods. Your grandfather saw he must be picking out a camping-place for the night. His horse was pretty nigh tired out, and was plodding along, head down. Suddenly he lifted his head, and pricked up his ears, and acted as if he heard or saw something out of the

common line. Your grandfather strained his eyes, peering on every side of him in the dusk, down into the black depths of the woods, but he could n't see a thing. He took his gun in his hand, ready for whatever might turn up. He thought perhaps the horse scented a wild beast. Before long he came over a hill, down into a hollow, and there, in a little open spot, was a bright fire burning and a lot of Indians camped round it."

"How frightened he must have been!" said Becky.

"Go on, go on, grandma," said Dan.

"He was n't frightened, because he knew they were friendly. They were very kind to him, and gave him some warm food, and he spent the night with them, giving them some tobacco next morning when he left. He said no one would believe how glad he was to see them, to meet any human beings after travelling alone in the woods all day, with no one to speak to but his horse. Well, by and by he began to hear the roar of the falls. He heard them long before he came to them, it was so still in the woods."

"He used to give the grandest description of

the falls, of how they looked to him when he stood there alone, nothing but woods all around him and the blue sky overhead, and saw that mighty volume of water pouring down over that high precipice, the roar of many waters shaking the ground under him. He said it was the most solemn and impressive sight he ever saw, and that he never felt so small and insignificant, or had such a realizing sense of the greatness and grandeur and power of the Omnipotent. He preached a great sermon about it, after he came home, from the ninety-third psalm: 'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea.' That sermon was considered a masterpiece. He repeated it several times in other places, by request.

"He was gone from home six weeks. When he got back both he and his horse were pretty well used up by all the exposure and hardship they had gone through. But he never regretted it. He always said he meant to go again sometime. If he were living now, when it is so easy travelling about in stage coaches, I dare

say he would go. I suppose it does n't take more'n a week now to go to Western New York."

Here the door opened, and Priscilla's head was thrust in. With it came the sound of loud voices from the study, across the hall.

"Oh, how good the popcorn smells," said Priscilla. "Bring it out in the study, Becky, and pass it round. Father wants you and Dan to go down cellar and get the apples and cider, and then we are going to have the singing. You'll come out, won't you, grandma?"

"Yes," said grandma, "I like the singing. Singing's a foretaste of heaven, I reckon. It often seems to me I can hear the voices of those that are dead and gone, joining in."

Out in the study was quite a little company of neighbors and parishioners, who were wont to drop into the minister's of a Sunday evening. There were Squire Drake, and Dr. Robbins, and Captain Pratt, and Deacon Kellogg, and often others, who liked to discuss politics as well as religion with the minister and each other. Andrew Jackson was President, and politics ran high. Squire Drake, who still wore his hair in a queue, and was the last man in

town to wear knee breeches, was a staunch Federalist, the doctor and the deacon firm Whigs, Captain Pratt a Democrat and fierce Jackson man.

Mr. Strong was a Whig, but did not think it becoming his cloth to be a violent partisan. As he had both Whigs and Democrats in his parish, probably something of the wisdom of the serpent mingled with his natural caution. But when the others were hard pushed by the captain, Mr. Strong often came to their rescue with quiet home-thrusts that made the enemy wince. To-night the discussion had waxed so loud and violent that Mr. Strong had thought best to shorten it by ordering the usual refreshments served.

As the children and grandma came out of her room, they heard Captain Pratt's high-pitched tones above all the others, accompanied by vigorous pounds now and then on the table. As they opened the study door a perfect babel of voices poured out, high on whose current could be distinguished such words as these: "nullification," "tariff," "bank charter," "Clay," "Calhoun," "Webster," "revenue laws," "Major Jack Downing says,"

"infamous, I tell you, sir," "country ruined," "Democrats," "Whigs," and so on.

"Yes, sir," Captain Pratt was shouting, "you may call Andrew Jackson as many hard names as you like, but I tell you he's saved this country from destruction, and he'll do it again, in spite of all the nullifiers and Federalists in the land, North or South. He sent word to Charleston that, if General Coffee could n't settle the business, 'by the Eternal, I'll take the field myself, with fifty thousand more soldiers.' And the old man'll do it, too, if it's necessary. He'll give 'em another battle of New Orleans."

"Good evening, friends," said grandma, pleasantly. "Saving the country, as usual, I see."

"Ah, Madam Strong," said Squire Drake, rising to place a chair for her near the fire, "our country may last your and my day out, but it has fallen on evil times. The future looks dark indeed for our unfortunate nation," — shaking his head gloomily.

Hostilities were now, however, suspended by mutual consent, out of deference to Madam Strong, and the conversation turned on such milder topics as the weather, the great meteoric

shower, the recent devastating fire in New York city, and the efforts of a monomaniac named Morse to get aid from Congress to erect some impossible sort of thing called a telegraph between Washington and Baltimore.

"The idiot actually pretends to say that he can send words, talk, all the way from Washington to Baltimore!" said Squire Drake.

"Perhaps he really believes it himself," said Dr. Robbins. "There's no doubt the man is crazy. But I guess he'll have a hard time convincing Congress."

"Well, now, I don't know about that," said Captain Pratt, who naturally took the other side. "Fulton seems to be making his steamboats work first-rate, and folks made just as much fun of him as they do now of Morse. 'Fulton's Folly,' they used to call steamboats."

"They would be 'Fulton's Folly,' to me still," said grandma. "You would n't catch me on one of them."

"And then look at the railroads," continued the captain. "They were considered all moonshine, not so very long ago, either. And now they've got one from Boston to Worcester, and they do say you can go twice a day from

Boston to Worcester and back again, if you want to."

"It seems incredible," said Mr. Strong.

"Well," said Deacon Kellogg, "them that wants to risk their necks whisking along in one of those machines can, for all me. You'll never catch me flying in the face of Providence by going in one of 'em."

"Medad Billings was saying to me only yesterday," said Dr. Robbins, "that, in his opinion, these railroads are going to ruin farmers, because horses will not be so much used, and so there will be no market for oats."

"I do not doubt it," said Squire Drake. "Did you see that letter in the last 'Boston Weekly Messenger,' about the great extent of railroads in York State? It is really alarming. They are building them on a most extensive scale. The Hudson River road, the writer said, from Albany to Schenectady, is fifteen miles long. Then there's another from Schenectady to Saratoga, twenty-one miles long. And they are not satisfied with that, even, but are talking of building another one. I don't know, I'm sure, what the country's coming to, but everything's changing.

The good old days and ways of our forefathers have gone, never to return, I fear."

"Pooh, pooh, Squire," began Captain Pratt. "The march of progress — "

But here he was interrupted by ear-piercing shrieks from the cellar below, and a lively scuttling up the cellar-stairs.

"Mercy on us!" said grandma. "What mischief is Dan up to now, I wonder?" while Mr. Strong arose with a frown, and went out into the keeping-room.

Becky and Dan had gone down cellar, Becky carrying the pan for apples, and Dan the candle and the big blue pitcher for cider. It was cold and damp in the cellar, though the walls were all banked up outside. The stone walls were covered with frost, that glistened as the candle's rays struck them. The candle's light, however, extended but a little way into the all-surrounding darkness, and the corners, especially back by the apple bins, looked black and dreadful to Becky. All the monsters in all the books she had ever read seemed lurking there, ready to pounce out on her.

"Come over to the bins with me, Dan, please do," she said.

"Oh, pooh," said Dan, "go ahead. It's cold down here, and I want to draw the cider, and be done with it."

"But father wants all kinds, — baldwins, greenings, spitzenbergs, and seek-no-farthens, and I can't see to pick them out without the candle's close by," urged Becky.

"Pshaw, you're afraid, you know you are," said Dan.

"I am *not*," said Becky stoutly, ashamed to own her fears.

"Well, then, I'll set the candle down here, on the pork barrel, half-way between us," said Dan. "I can see to turn the faucet, and I'll be drawing the cider while you get the apples."

Becky could not object to this plan after declaring that she was not afraid. But she hurried to fill her pan, casting timid glances over her shoulder at the particularly black corner behind the big chimney, where she thought she heard a mysterious rustling sound. Suddenly — oh horrible! — Dan seized his pitcher in one hand, the candle in the other, and darted off upstairs, chuckling to himself, leaving Becky down cellar, all alone, in the thick darkness! It seemed to smother her. Unseen monsters with cold, bony

hands, seemed, to Becky's lively imagination, reaching out to clutch her, as she ran screaming towards the stairs, strewing the cellar bottom with apples. The door above opens, a welcome flood of light streams down, her father comes, she is safe!

Mr. Strong, who had a very tender spot in his heart for his little motherless girl, soothed her, and wiped her tears. Then, turning to Dan, he said sternly, —

“Go downstairs and pick up the apples. Then go straight to bed. If you ever frighten your sister again in this manner, I will chastise you severely.”

“I did n't think it would frighten her much,” said Dan. “I was only in fun.”

“I do not want to hear any excuses,” said his father. “Truly, Solomon was right, ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child!’”

Dan lit his candle, and went off up to bed alone in the cold, thinking to himself, —

“Father's so fussy about Becky, and she's such a cry-baby. You can't point your finger at her. Girls are no good, any way. They never can take a joke. I think it's too bad to send me off to bed so early, Sunday night too, just for nothing at all.”

Dan was sorry to lose the apples, cold and fresh from the cellar, the crisp, salt pop-corn, the cold, sparkling cider, and the interesting talk that always went on over them around the open fire. But worst of all was it to lose the Sunday-night singing. Mr. Strong, in whose family ran a great love of music, had lately had built at Winchester a small organ for home use. He played sacred music on it, as did Priscilla, and even Dan was sometimes allowed to pick out tunes by ear, as a reward for extra virtue on his part. It was the custom of the family to have a grand singing of hymns Sunday nights. The home singers were usually reinforced by members of the choir or others musically inclined, who liked to drop in Sunday night, to sing with the new organ.

Dan lay there alone, upstairs, in the dark and cold. The sound of cheerful voices, and sometimes of a general laugh, came to him up the stairs, making him feel bitterly that he was losing all the fun and good stories. Then came floating up the sweet, solemn tones of the organ, and the mellow notes of harmonious voices uplifted in "Brattle Street."

Hark! Was n't that Abby Long's voice?

Abby was the leading soprano of the choir, and Dan particularly loved to hear her sing. Her sweet, pure, strong voice, soaring up so easily above all the rest, always had something angelic about it to his fancy. Yes, it was Abby. No one else in Hackmatack could sing like that, — “just like a bird warbling,” thought Dan. And now she and Almira Abbot were singing alone, a duet, — something new, that Dan had never heard.

Dan felt much as he might have done shut out of heaven, hearing the hymns of the blessed from within floating over the walls.

“I don’t care! it’s a shame, — a mean, burning shame,” he said to himself, as he tossed uneasily about, until the feather bed looked like a billowy sea.

When the nine o’clock bell rang, and the company promptly dispersed, and ’Rasmus came to bed, Dan was sound asleep. But if ’Rasmus had looked closely he might have seen something very like a tear-drop still on Dan’s eye lashes.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BUSY MONDAY.

MONDAY morning dawned clear and bright, and every one was up early at the minister's, for it was Thanksgiving week, and there was much to be done. Lyddy Ann rose at some unknown hour in the darkness, and was at her wash-tub long before daylight. Priscilla and grandma prepared breakfast. 'Rasmus and Dan had the milking done before sunrise, and came in to breakfast with keen appetites from working in the frosty morning air.

Dan's troubles had not lasted over night. He had slept them all off, and was now as bright and wide-awake as ever. Grandma, who was under a full head of steam this morning, laid out the day's campaign for every one at the breakfast table as follows: —

“Lyddy Ann, you'll get the washing out so early and it's going to be such a good drying

day, I guess we can get at the ironing this afternoon."

"Yes 'm," said Lyddy Ann. "That's what I'm a calculatin' on."

"We'll all take hold and help you," continued grandma. "Becky, you need n't plant yourself down over a book, for there's going to be plenty for you to do. You must wipe the dishes for Priscilla, and help her make the beds, and dust after she has brushed up the rooms, and wash the potatoes for dinner; and after dinner you can iron the handkerchiefs and towels."

"Oh, dear!" said Becky, who had some plans for the day much more fascinating than grandma's.

"Don't let's have any 'oh, dears,'" said grandma, briskly. "Everybody's got to take hold and help this week all they can, for I've got so much to do and to see to, I don't know how in the world I'm ever going to bring it all round. Luckily, we're all going up to your Grandmother Bullard's to keep Thanksgiving. so there is n't quite so much cooking to be done. But we must make a good batch of mince pies this week."

"Why not let the pies go until next week?" suggested Mr. Strong.

"Erasmus! Who ever heard of not making your mince pies for the winter Thanksgiving week? I should hope I was n't quite so shiftless as that! 'Rasmus," turning to the junior, "right after breakfast I want you to harness up and drive over for Miss Patty Babcock. School begins the Monday after Thanksgiving, and you boys must have your new winter suits made this week. I want them done for Thanksgiving, if Miss Patty can possibly bring it around, and I guess she can, with our help. Thanksgiving's the proper time to put on your new suits, and I'm not going to have your Grandmother Bullard think I neglect you children."

"I'm glad Miss Patty is coming," said Becky; "she always talks so much, and tells so much news."

"I fear Miss Patty is something of a gossip," said Mr. Strong.

"Oh, no! I don't think so," said grandma. "She's real kind-hearted and well-meaning. She takes a great interest in everybody, and she goes out so much she can't help picking up what's going on. She does give it a pretty good setting out sometimes, I admit."

"Can't I go after Miss Patty, instead of 'Rasmus?" asked Dan.

"No, Daniel," said his father. "You must thresh corn enough for a bag of samp this morning, and go to mill this afternoon."

"Oh, can't I go to mill with Dan?" asked Becky, who sometimes had this high privilege.

"Not to-day," said her father. "Dan will have to go in the gig to-day."

Dan liked to go to mill, and he liked to drive the gig. In that vehicle he often succeeded, once out of sight of the house, in getting a pace out of old John that would have astonished his father. Old John was a wise and knowing horse, and understood the minister's weaknesses perfectly. When Mr. Strong held the reins his jogging trot soon settled into a slow walk, and sometimes, when his master had been particularly deep in meditating his next week's sermon, he had waked from his abstraction to find himself stranded one side the road in a fence corner, where old John was calmly eating grass. Old John knew the house of every parishioner in town, and never passed one without making a determined effort to call. Sometimes, lost in

meditation, Mr. Strong would find the family coming out to welcome him, when he had supposed himself driving along the road. More than one of these unpremeditated calls had old John forced on his absent-minded master.

"Priscilla," continued grandma, after Lyddy Ann had returned to her wash-tubs, "you'd better clear-starch your own ruffles, and clap your own laces. Lyddy Ann is a first rate washer, but she takes hold most too strong for fine things. And you want everything done up extra nice this week to take off to boarding-school."

"Yes, grandma, I know it," said Priscilla, cheerfully.

No need to urge Priscilla. She was a very capable girl, almost coming up to grandma's idea of "what girls used to be when I was young." Grandma, at times, took dark views of Becky's future.

"Becky always has her nose in a book, just like her father," grandma often said. "And she's crazy to be painting as soon as she is old enough to have her mother's paint-box. I'm afraid she'll never be good for anything but a school-teacher. But Priscilla's smart

She's got faculty. She takes after me,— is just such a girl as I was."

Next week Priscilla was going away to boarding-school. A great and delightful episode it was in her life, and there was little danger of her forgetting any duties this week.

"Erasmus," said grandma, now turning to her son, having portioned out their duties to the rest of the family, "when 'Rasmus comes back with the horse, don't you think he had better drive you over to call at Abijah Benson's? None of their folks were at church yesterday, and I'm afraid some of them are sick."

"I must go to work at once on my Thanksgiving discourse," said Mr. Strong. "This afternoon, when I am tired of writing, I will walk over there across lots. The walk will refresh me."

"Well, then, you'd better call on the Widow Pettit on your way home. It's some time since you've been there, and the widow is a little touchy, you know, and gets huffy if you don't call about once in so often."

"Very well," said her son, with a resigned look. The Widow Pettit was one of his minor trials.

And now the family scattered to their various duties. Daniel, in his last year's suit, very short at the wrists and ankles, and much patched on all the projecting points, went cheerfully out to his threshing. Boys had to work, and Dan expected to, as a matter of course. Besides, there was the agreeable prospect for the afternoon. So from the cornhouse soon came the regular "whack, whack," of a flail vigorously handled, and a boy's voice uplifted now in song, now in a musical whistle. Dan whistled as easily as a bird sings. The trills and fancy notes he introduced were the envy and admiration of all the other boys, none of whom could begin to rival Dan in this accomplishment.

By and by Dan heard the rattle of wheels driving into the yard, and ran out, thinking it was 'Rasmus with Miss Patty. No, it was the old white horse and chaise of Parson Frost. Dan knew the horse as far as he could see it; in fact, he and 'Rasmus knew all the equipages of all the ministers for many miles around. They always acted as hostlers for the ministers when they came to Mr. Strong's on exchange, or at other times. The "other times" were frequent.

Hackmatack being on the stage road to Boston, his brother clergy found Mr. Strong's a convenient free hotel and stopping-place in their travels to and fro. So the north "spare room," the prophet's chamber, was never long unoccupied. The spirit of the times was hospitable, and these guests were made welcome and their visits enjoyed.

Dan knew Parson Frost's whole programme, as well before as after Mr. Frost had recounted it to him with solemn preciseness. His son Ezekiel had driven him over from home. Ezekiel would stay to dinner, and then return home. Parson Frost would spend the night and the next day, in order to commune with Brother Strong on various points, and take the stage for Boston early the following morning. Dan put the white horse in the barn and fed it, while Parson Frost and his son went into the house, where they were duly welcomed by Madam Strong and her son.

Grandma was not at all flurried by having unexpected company to dinner this busy Monday. In fact, company was always expected.

"I'm so used to having a minister or two drop down on my head most any time, I don't

make anything of it," she was used to say to would-be sympathizers. This morning she said to Priscilla, —

"I'm real glad we had boiled dish to-day, for there's sure to be enough of it. Parson Frost's a pretty big eater. You'd better put an extra pumpkin pie a-warming. Parson Frost likes them warm, and he always takes two pieces. He always says he does n't get hold of any pumpkin pies anywhere that come up to mine. I *can* make a pretty fair pumpkin pie, if I do say it that ought not."

The minister accepted his brother's visit with cheerful resignation. They would have much comparing of views together on many interesting and weighty matters. Brother Frost was a sound theologian. And he could work all the harder to-morrow on the delayed Thanksgiving discourse to make up for lost time.

Dan was returning to his threshing, when he saw 'Rasmus driving into the yard at a spanking trot; for old John was a Morgan, and had plenty of speed and fire in him when he was stirred up, which he generally was when the boys held the reins. Miss Patty's long green barege veil was flying out behind, and her bonnet much on one

side, while she clutched the chaise firmly with one hand, and held her goose tightly with the other.

“How d’ye do, Daniel?” she said, a little out of breath, as Dan came to help her out. “I declare, I don’t know whether I’m in the body or out on’t hardly, ’Rasmus buzzed me along at sech a rate over the bumps. My bunnit’s all skew, and I had to hold on to the goose to keep it from flying right out o’ the shay. Here, take my goose and press-board, and lay ’em on the steps, before you help me out. You’d better come right into the house, Daniel, and let me take your measure. I’ll begin on your suit first.”

“Miss Patty,” said Dan, opening up a subject that had long lain near his heart, “I wish you would n’t make my clothes so much too big for me this time. I hate to have my spencers so big and wrinkly, and my sleeves way down almost to my finger-ends, and my trousers so loose and baggy in the seat. My clothes are made big enough for father. I expect he’ll get them on by mistake sometime.”

“That’s jest as much as a boy knows about it,” said Miss Patty. “Land sakes! Growin’ as

you be, the idee of havin' your clothes made to fit in the fust place! You could n't git into 'em by next spring, if I made 'em jest big enough now. And where'd you be next winter, I'd like to know? Do my best, I shall have my match to keep ahead of you. Your father 'll have to put a stone on your head, if you keep on spindlin' up this way. Now 'Rasmus is more stubbed. He's nigh got his growth, I guess."

"'Rasmus tried to get father to let him buy a suit at the tailor's over in Greenfield this fall," said Dan.

This was rank heresy in Miss Patty's eyes.

"Humph," she said, "folks that wants to waste their money on store clothes can, for all me. One of my suits will out-wear two or three of them flimsy store suits. But young folks have to live and learn, I spose. You take the goose in, Daniel, and put it heatin' by the kitchen fire, and I'll bring the press-board along myself."

After Dan had been measured, he returned to his threshing. 'Rasmus, having unharnessed old John and put him in his stall, went to work on the wood-pile. Several cords of wood were stacked up by the back door, which were to be

sawed, split, and piled in the wood-house before winter set in, and the boys were expected to spend most of their spare time on it. Their father, too, often lent a hand, feeling the exercise beneficial.

After a while Becky came out to the corn-house.

“Is n't it nice, Dan?” she said. “I hurried so fast, and finished all my work so soon, and set the table for dinner and everything, that grand-ma said I might play till dinner-time.”

Dan was glad of Becky's company, in spite of his disparaging remarks about girls the night before.

“That's good,” he said. “Come on in. But I can't stop threshing. I've been so hindered with Miss Patty and Parson Frost that I shall have to hurry to get enough corn threshed by noon.”

“I'll help you,” said Becky valiantly, seizing a flail.

It looked so easy when Dan did it. The flail swung easily around in the air, exactly so every time, as if by machinery, and came down hard on the ears of corn, making the kernels fly, and filling the air with white dust. But Becky's flail

“wobbled,” and hit her own head, and came down in a feeble, flabby way truly disgusting considering all the energy she had laid out.

“I *will* do it,” said Becky, and making a tremendous effort she succeeded in giving Dan a sounding rap on the head, sending his cap flying.

“Oh, Dan, I did n’t mean to,” she cried. “Did I hurt you much?”

“Well, I should say you did, a little. Nothing but that cap saved my brains, I guess. That’s about the way I should suppose a girl would thresh,— hit everything around but the corn. You’ll knock the door off the hinges next. I guess I can get along without any more of your help.”

“I’m going to feed the hens, then,” said Becky, throwing a handful of corn out to the hens, who had gathered round the open door to pick up the stray kernels flying out. Then she climbed up on the high bin, far above Dan’s head, and dug and hunted for red ears, and began to build a cob house, beautifully variegated with red and yellow.

Before long, the welcome notes of the conch-shell were heard, and there was a lively race of

hungry children, from corn-house and wood-pile to the dinner table. Parson Frost always said such a long grace. It seemed to the children they never could wait until he finished, their hunger increasing every instant, while Parson Frost went on, enumerating all the reasons why they should be thankful for "these bounties."

After dinner Dan put a bag of corn in the bottom of the gig, and set out for Potter's mill, three miles off, on Roaring Brook. It was a cold day, but bright and clear. Old John, after being touched up a little by Dan, trotted briskly along with the light gig, and Dan was well satisfied with his lot, feeling this far preferable to helping 'Rasmus at the wood-pile.

Mr. Potter took a portion of the corn as toll, to pay for grinding, and soon had the rest in the hopper. Dan always enjoyed prowling about the mill. So he had a good time, while waiting for his grist, inspecting the machinery, watching the great stones go around, — slow and sure as fate, crunching all that came between them, — throwing chips and sticks out into the open water just above the dam and seeing them come over, walking out on the dam as far as he dared, testing the strength of the ice in the pond above,

and, in short, trying a variety of experiments that would have interested his grandmother deeply, could she have seen them. His clothes were nearly as white with mill-dust as the miller's own when he started for home, with his pockets full of wheat, destined to be chewed to a gummy paste by himself and Becky.

Old John knew that he was homeward bound, and needed, not urging, but holding in. Dan sat up straight in the gig, with the reins taut, feeling every inch a man as he dashed along, holding the bag of sump between his feet to keep it from bouncing out.

Mr. Strong's front gate was in two parts, — a long part for vehicles, a small one for foot passengers. His father had opened the big gate for Dan when he drove out, and should have fastened it back, but wholly forgot to do so, his head was so full of an argument he had been holding with Brother Frost. He had just thought of an unanswerable point, and leaving the gate swinging, went into the house, rubbing his hands and smiling as he thought to himself, —

“ I wonder how Frost will get around that.”

As Dan, returning home at a swinging pace,

drew near the gate, he saw that the long gate had swung together, and tried to stop old John. The small gate was open, and was quite wide enough to admit the horse. Old John was so impatient to get into his stall, that he failed to display his usual good sense. He headed for the little gate with all his might. In vain did Dan saw on the reins, and shout, "Whoa!" Old John was strong on the bit, and nothing could stop him. He pushed on through the small gate.

Miss Patty, who was sewing by the dining-room window, heard a crash, looked out, and saw the catastrophe.

"Oh, Madam Strong!" she cried; "Daniel is killed, sartain sure!"

"I always knew it!" said grandma. "I always told Erasmus we never should raise that boy!"

Out of the house rushed, bareheaded, grandma, Priscilla, Miss Patty, Becky, and the two ministers, while 'Rasmus came running from the wood-pile, and Lyddy Ann from the kitchen. There sat Dan, in the gig one side the fence, pale but determined, still holding the reins with an iron grip, and there stood old John the other

side of the fence, facing him, looking much disconcerted. The gig had crashed into the fence, smashing several pickets. The whipple-tree had broken, letting the horse free, but Dan's tight hold on the reins had pulled old John completely round, facing him.

It was a comical sight, and when the first fright was over, and it was found no serious damage had been done, every one laughed, even Dan himself, after his father, instead of scolding him, took all the blame on himself, and even praised Dan for holding fast to the lines.

"A good principle to fix in a boy's mind," he said to Mr. Frost, as they returned to the house, "even if somewhat misapplied in this instance."

"I never did see any one like Daniel," said grandma, after they had settled down to tailoring again. "Somehow things are always happening to him, whether it's his fault or not. Now, 'Rasmus ain't so. He's always the same; steady-going, reliable, nothing to worry any one."

"You hain't no call to worry about Daniel," said Miss Patty, who, to tell the truth, rather liked to have things happen. It was a variety,

and it gave her something to talk about at the next place where she sewed. "Daniel will come out all right, give him time enough. He's a real smart, up-and-a-comin' boy, and he 'll make a likely man."

CHAPTER IX.

A WEDDING.

THE next morning, while stillness and starlight yet brooded over the earth, when no hint of gray dawn yet stole up the dark east, when even the roosters still dreamed peacefully on their perches, lights might have been seen twinkling here and there from various windows in the parsonage.

The stage for Boston left Brattleboro, Vt., at one o'clock in the morning, reaching Hackmatack about four. Parson Frost was to take the stage this morning, and it was not consistent with grandma's ideas of hospitality to let him start cold and hungry. Many and many a time in the past had she been up at this untimely hour, to see some minister comfortably off for Boston. But now, with all her energy, she realized she was not quite so young as once. So she was glad to have Lyddy Ann, — who, what-

ever her faults of temper, had not, as grandma often said, "a lazy bone in her body," — say the night before, —

"Don't you think of sech a thing, Madam Strong, as gittin' up to-morrow mornin' to see Parson Frost off. If Dan 'll git up and help start the fires, I'll git the Parson off in fust-rate shape. I should n't wonder a speck if I could pritty nigh git the rest of the ironin' out of the way by our breakfast time, so we can begin fixin' the mince pie meat right away."

"I'll get up," said Dan. "I'd just as soon get up as not, if you'll call me, Lyddy Ann. You know I never could wake up myself."

"Except Muster mornin'," said Lyddy Ann.

"Oh, Muster, of course. Any boy'd wake up Muster morning," said Dan.

It seemed to him he had hardly slept an hour when he felt Lyddy Ann's hand shaking him, and heard her say, in a sepulchral whisper, —

"Wake up, Dan! Dan, wake up! It's time to be a-movin'. You start the fires, and I'll be down in a minute."

Dan was so sleepy he nearly dropped off again. But suddenly remembering, "The stage! the stage for Boston!" he bounded out of bed,

and into his clothes in very few moments, leaving 'Rasmus fast asleep.

He went down the back stairs into the kitchen first. Lyddy Ann had carefully banked up the huge back-log with ashes the night before, to keep the fire. Matches not being invented, if any one "lost fire," they were obliged to go to the nearest neighbor's and borrow coals to start again. But no such calamity awaited Dan this morning, for, on raking open the bed of ashes, there was a great bed of glowing red coals. Dan put on a big back-log on the andirons, and a fore-stick, and built on these quite a little house of logs, so skilfully crossed and arranged that when he poked some birch bark in underneath, rosy flames shot right up through the whole to the very top, roaring cheerfully up the great chimney's throat, and a blaze of light soon illuminated even the darkest corners of the kitchen, changing its temperature from an icy chillness to a glowing warmth.

Lyddy Ann had filled the heavy iron tea-kettle the night before, and hung it on the crane, so it lost no time in beginning to boil. The tin kitchen for baking biscuit was drawn up near the fire, and almost in the ashes had been set

over night a pan of biscuit dough, covered tightly with a thick cloth, which Dan had been charged to move carefully back before starting his fire. Dan next went into the dining-room where the table stood set for breakfast the night before, and started a roaring fire there too, in like manner.

Lyddy Ann, having called Mr. Frost, was bustling around the kitchen by candle light, as wide awake as if it were noon, pressing Dan into service to bring in more wood, to run out to the woodhouse pantry for the butter, so it should be softening from its rock-like hardness, to pour water down the pump and bring back the water let off last night to avoid freezing, and so on. Dan often said, —

“It takes Lyddy Ann to keep a fellow jumping, if she gets a good hold on him.”

Dan had so many chances to make himself useful that he had a very good appetite for breakfast by the time Mr. Frost came down stairs, looking rather sleepy and heavy-eyed, but brightening visibly as he caught the odor of Lyddy Ann's delicious hot coffee and warm biscuits, and he fell to, as one who realizes that the time is short and precious.

"My son," he said to Daniel, "perhaps it would be well for you to take my carpet-bag and run down to the turnpike, to hail the stage-coach for me, lest peradventure it pass ere I arrive there."

So Dan took the carpet-bag in one hand, and a buttered biscuit in the other, and went down to the corner, where his father's private road joined the turnpike. How odd it seemed to be out of doors in the dark, when all the world was fast asleep! Dan liked it, for once, for the novelty. How still it was, and how the stars twinkled overhead, as Dan stood at the corner, looking up the gray road, which he could but dimly make out. In summer the birds would have been singing uproariously, but now there was not a sound. Nature seemed dead.

The intense stillness and loneliness were a little awesome to Dan. He was glad when he heard, presently, the distant rattling of wheels over the frozen ground. Then there came the loud notes of a horn, echoing with a wild, weird sound from hill to hill in the darkness. The stage-driver was blowing his horn, as was his custom, not only to notify any would-be passengers of his approach, but also to warn the post-

master, that the mail-bags might be out and ready for him. The notes of the stage-horn always stirred in Dan longings to get out into the great world that lay outside the home hills, gave him a feeling of possible adventure.

The rumble of wheels grew nearer and nearer, and soon the stage came dashing along as fast as four spirited horses could bring it, its lamps making a little circle of brightness about it,—a magnificent sight in Dan's eyes.

“Hello!” shouted Dan, waving the carpet-bag aloft, giving Parson Frost's sermons therein a higher and livelier flight than they were at all accustomed to take. There was a delightful sense of power in merely stopping such a dashing equipage. Mr. Brownell, the stage-driver, knew and was known by every man, woman, and child along his route. The good old fashion of school-children's saluting every traveller they met was beginning to die out. But Mr. Brownell still insisted on its observance. All the children along his route were trained by him to draw up beside the road as he passed, and greet him with courtesies or bows. Then Mr. Brownell would say, “That's a lady!” or,

"A nice boy!" and often throw out a penny besides.

He now skilfully reined up his steaming horses.

"Good morning, Daniel," he said. "Your father going to Boston?"

"No, sir, Mr. Frost's going."

Mr. Frost now came running up, and drawing on a huge pair of mittens, seized the carpet-bag with a hasty, "Thank you, Daniel," and climbed into the dark interior of the stage, where Dan discerned dim, dark forms of people much bundled up, lying back in the corners, fast asleep. By and by, when the stage stopped to change horses, every one would wake up, and get out to stretch his legs, and Mr. Frost would get another breakfast with the other passengers, and there would be much pleasant chat, and many good stories told, as the day wore on, and the passengers gradually grew acquainted.

Dan knew all about it. He had often heard stories of stage-coach-travelling joys and sorrows. He only wished he too were going to Boston, that great city which represented the world to him.

"Anyway, I'll go as far as the tavern," he

thought, catching on behind the trunk-rack, as Mr. Brownell cracked his whip, and the horses dashed off again.

Dan hung manfully on, swinging his legs up underneath with a skill born of much practice, and so enjoyed a rather precarious ride to the tavern, where Bill, the hostler, looking more than half asleep, stumbled out with a lantern to water the horses.

"What're you round here for this time o' night, I'd like to know, Dan Strong?" he said.

"For fun," said Dan.

"Fun!" growled Bill. "I guess you'd get tired of that sort of fun if you had to turn out of bed every mornin', as I do."

Dan enjoyed another short ride across to the store, where Captain Pratt, the post-master, in shirt-sleeves and hastily drawn on trousers, tossed up a mail-bag to Mr. Brownell, caught another thrown down to him, with no unnecessary words on either side, and went back to bed again.

Plainly Dan could go no farther towards Boston this morning. The stage rolled off, leaving him standing, watching its lights until they faded away in the distance, and it was well on its way

to Orange before he had scampered home again.

Dan came to the breakfast table with an agreeable sense of superiority, as of one who had travelled and had experiences while the rest were abed and asleep. Pride must have a fall, however.

“What’s the matter with the seat of your trousers, Daniel?” asked his grandmother, peering anxiously at those long-suffering garments over her glasses.

“I don’t know,” said Dan. “Oh, I guess I must have busted ’em down at the tavern when I fell off the stage. It stopped with a bounce, when I was n’t expecting it, and I lost my hold.”

“What!” said his grandmother, “do you mean to say you were hanging on behind the stage in the middle of the night?”

“Yes ’m.”

“Well, I never did!” said grandma. “What won’t boys do!”

Miss Patty would have laughed but for the expression on Mr. Strong’s face, which was not conducive to mirth. Dan saw it and hastened to retire to change his clothes, hearing his grandmother say, as he left the room, —

“That boy’s clothes ought to be made of leather.”

After all this, it was quite tame to have to come down to working on the wood-pile with ’Rasmus, and Dan, who was doubtless a little sleepy, grumbled a good deal as ’Rasmus sawed, and he split, until the pile of neatly arranged wood in the wood-house began to grow perceptibly.

“This is the worst wood I ever saw,” he growled.

“This came from old Calvin Skinner’s,” said ’Rasmus. “I saw it when he brought it. He came about dusk with it, as if he were ashamed of it, and no wonder.”

“His wood is just like him,” said Dan, whacking his axe viciously into a knotty stick; “just as gnarly, and twisted, and mean.”

“Hello, Dan!” suddenly said ’Rasmus. “What’s that coming to our house? I declare, it looks like a wedding.”

“Sure enough,” said Dan, taking a hasty look down the road. “We must go to take the horses.”

And away ran the boys to the front gate, glad of any excuse to desert Calvin Skinner’s wood.

Mr. Strong’s south kitchen window, much to

the satisfaction of Lyddy Ann, commanded a view, not only of the road leading to the house, but also of the turnpike beyond. Lyddy Ann noticed quite a cavalcade of carriages driving rapidly along the turnpike.

"Why," she said to Becky, "what under the canopy's goin' on? One, two,—yes, five shays, and a buggy wagon. Why, they've turned up our road. It must be a weddin'."

Dropping her dish-cloth, she ran to the keeping-room, to announce the news.

Miss Patty put on her far-seeing glasses and ran to the kitchen window to look out.

"Yes," she said, "the girl in the front chaise has got white ribbins a-flyin'. Yes, it's a weddin', sure enough. What, if it ain't Malviny Bates and Orrin Plunkett! If this don't beat all! I heerd they were advertised on the notice board. And so they are really goin' to git married, after all."

And while the wedding procession approached Miss Patty hastily recounted the tale of the true love of Malvina and Orrin, which it seemed had by no means "run smooth."

"You see, Orrin's folks are Baptists, and when he began to shine up to Malviny, they

were dredful sot against it, because the Bateses are Universallers. They say old man Bates really believes that everybody's goin' to be saved, and that there ain't no sech thing as hell fire! I must say, I don't blame the Plunketts a mite. Sech views is terrible loose and dangerous, though Mr. Bates is a first rate-man himself, and Malviny's a nice girl. Orrin's one of the sot kind, and the more his folks opposed him, the sotter he got. So after a while he and Malviny got engaged, and the old folks had to make the best on 't.

“Wall, along in the winter, a spruce young feller from Williams College came to teach school in the Catamount Hill deestrick. He 'peared to be dredful struck with Malviny, and when he was a-boardin' there, he took her out a-sleigh-ridin' twice. Orrin was flamin' mad, and made a great fuss, and Malviny was contrary, and so the engagement was broke dead off. Orrin's so stuffy and sot, no one sposed he would ever look at Malviny Bates again. And when I worked over at the Bateses last spring I kinder joked Malviny a leetle about Orrin, jest to see how she'd take it, and my, how mad she was! She flamed up as red as a beet, and she says, says she,

“ ‘Don’t say nothin’ to me ’bout Orrin Plunkett. I hate him worse ’n pisen.’ She used them very words. And now they ’re a goin’ to be married after all! I spose there’s been so much talk about their affairs they thought they’d jest drive over to the parson’s and git the knot tied, sorter quiet like. I’m mortal glad I happened to be here this week.”

Many a young couple had taken each other for better or worse in Mr. Strong’s study. So his family was quite equal to the emergency. Dan and ’Rasmus held the horses while the young men helped the ladies to alight, and after tying and blanketing the horses, hurried into the house to make themselves fit to see the ceremony. Priscilla ran to the study to notify her father. Mr. Strong had a great respect for his office, and believed in performing all its offices with a decent dignity and reverence. He hastened to his own room, slipped out of his dressing-gown and into his black suit and white cravat, and carefully brushed his hair, much rumpled by mental conflict; for the minister had a habit of running his fingers through and through it, till it stood on end, when in pursuit of an evasive idea or simile.

Grandma flew out to cut some of the pound cake, of which she was careful to keep a good supply always on hand, and told Lyddy Ann to make some coffee. In the good old times, when her husband was minister, grandma was wont to pass wine on wedding occasions, or even a mug of hot flip if the day was cold. But the Washingtonian temperance movement had swept over the land, and it would not answer now, above all in the minister's house.

Miss Patty, so glad and excited to be "in at the death" she hardly knew what she was about, tore off her blue-checked apron, brushed her dress, and patted her hair, and said to Becky:

"How does my fore-piece look? Is my cap on straight? If I'd had an idee of anything of this sort a-happenin' I'd have brought my best one."

Becky hopped up and down in the midst of the bustle, from pure excitement. Meantime, the young folks in the study were giggling and whispering, as if being married were the funniest joke imaginable, all but Orrin and Malvina, who looked shy, awkward, and uncomfortable enough. Orrin did not feel any more at ease for the favor of white ribbon pinned on his coat, or because

his big, strong hands, unused to gloves, were now encased in a huge pair of white kid gloves. Malvina, being a woman, took more kindly to her white ribbons and gloves.

Miss Patty was right in her conjecture. The young couple had thought the quieter their wedding could be kept, under all the circumstances, the better. When the minister's family filed into the study, Miss Patty bringing up the rear, her eyes standing out of her head with eager curiosity, it is safe to say that Orrin was not over-pleased. Miss Patty and privacy were well known to be two things that did not go together. Malvina had quietly gone over to Greenfield and had her changeable silk dress made up, and bought a "brochay" shawl with a white centre, and the white bonnet and gloves, and was prepared to dazzle the congregation next Sunday by the magnificence of her "coming out" as bride. And now here was Miss Patty, absorbing every detail through her spectacles, ready to proclaim it all on the house-tops. It was too bad.

Orrin, however, thought, —

"Well, I don't care. I've got Malvina at last. Now let folks talk if they want to."

But now Mr. Strong took his place, ready to begin the ceremony, and more trivial thoughts vanished.

“You will please join your right hands.”

A solemn hush fell on the little company, as Mr. Strong's deep, earnest voice went on, —

“Do you, Orrin, take this woman whom you hold by the hand, for your lawful, wedded wife? Do you promise, forsaking all others, to cleave to her only, to love and cherish her, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth, till death do you part?”

“I do,” said Orrin, in a tone of manly earnestness.

Malvina answered the same question in a voice scarcely audible, even in the breathless stillness.

“Till death do you part!” The words opened up a wide vista to the minds of the young folks present. Some of the girls wiped tears away. The words, Mr. Strong's voice and manner, made marriage seem something far more serious than a good joke, as he concluded solemnly, —

“I pronounce you man and wife, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”

Then followed an earnest prayer by Mr. Strong, at whose close every one stood in rather an awkward silence, not knowing what to do next. But Mr. Strong came to the rescue by graciously asking leave to salute the bride, and let down something of the awe the impressive ceremony had thrown over the company by a few stately pleasantries. The young men present followed his example, and grandma went round talking to every one and putting them all at their ease, and the children passed the cake and coffee, and Malvina looked so pretty among her fluttering white ribbons, all blushes and smiles at being called "Mrs. Plunkett," and the anxious look on Orrin's face gave way to one of unmistakable happiness, so that at last, when they dashed away, as fast as horses could trot, the very horses seeming to feel the infection of the occasion, they were a very gay spectacle. And Orrin did n't care who saw them now.

"Well, I do declare!" said Miss Patty, when the parsonage had settled down into its normal state of quiet after this wave of excitement had subsided. "I'm that flustered it don't seem 't if I could settle down to sewin' again! To

think I should happen to be here jest in the nick o' time and see it all! And I'm a-goin' over to Catamount Hill to work next week, too. Folks over there'll be tickled to death to hear all about it,— who was here, and what Malvina wore, and what the parson said, and jest how they looked and acted. Mr Strong talked to 'em real solemn like. He's a master-hand at weddin's and funerals. I wonder when she got her changeable silk made up? I should n't wonder a mite if she put it out over in Greenfield. I know they hain't had the mantua-maker at the Bateses this fall. She must have had something stiff under them leg o' mutton sleeves to make 'em stand out so handsome. Well, it does seem providential that I should happen to be a-workin' here this week."

Out at the wood-pile the boys were also discussing the wedding.

"How silly Orrin Plunkett looked," said Dan in a tone of great contempt, "standing there like a great bear in mittens, with his white gloves on, holding a girl's hand! I would n't make myself so ridiculous for anything. I'll never get married, see if I do."

"Well," said 'Rasmus, slowly; "I don't

know about that. Perhaps you 'll change your mind."

Privately, 'Rasmus had thought a good many times lately what a very pretty girl Sybil Ward was; the prettiest girl in all Hackmatack, in 'Rasmus's opinion. Perhaps by and by, when he had become the great merchant or manufacturer he meant to be, perhaps then, — well, who knew what might happen then? But he was careful not to confide these dreams to Dan.

CHAPTER X.

THANKSGIVING.

THE day before Thanksgiving was a glorious day, in the children's opinion, almost equal to Thanksgiving itself, or even to the delightful day after, sacred to visiting from time immemorial. It really seemed as if the sweet savor of all the rich cooking being done in town that day would rise like incense to the top of Mt. Zoar itself, — Mt. Zoar, the Hackmatack mountain, which loomed up half a mile high, a prominent feature of the landscape from all over town.

At Mr. Strong's, the great brick oven was heated, and all the children were pressed into active but willing service, paring and chopping apples, picking over raisins, running down cellar, out doors, and upstairs, on errands, wherever the general-in-chief of all the doings, grandma, and her chief-of-staff, Lyddy Ann, commanded.

Toward night grandma and Lyddy Ann stood in the cold pantry out in the woodhouse, regarding with much satisfaction the results of the week's labors.

"Ten pumpkin, five apple, eight apple-pudding, and twenty-four mince," said grandma, counting over the pies, "besides two pans of doughnuts and the fruit-cake. That ought to take us along some time, Lyddy Ann."

"A body'd spose so," replied that faithful handmaid, "but I'm most afraid we hain't got mince pies enough to carry us through to March meetin'. We have sech a raft of ministers a-comin' and goin' here all the time. We might as well hang out a tavern sign and be done with it."

"Well, well," said grandma, who had been a country minister's wife all her life, "never mind, Lyddy Ann. We are commanded to be 'given to hospitality,' you know. I have put some mince meat down in jars, and we'll have another baking along in February."

Grandma now looked contemplatively at the rows of chickens dangling by their legs from the pantry hooks, apparently counting them, but secretly debating how best to broach a dis-

tasteful topic to Lyddy Ann, — a topic on which that vigorous hand-maiden was certain to disagree with her. Finally, as if the idea had just struck her, she said: —

“I believe I’ll send Dan over on the mountain road with a couple of chickens and some mince pies, for Moses Streeter’s folks.”

“What! Mose Streeter?” exclaimed Lyddy Ann, sharply. “Now, Miss Strong, you ain’t never goin’ to encourage that shif’less Mose Streeter by pamperin’ him up with some of our best cookin’, be you? He’s the laziest, good-for-nothin’est, do-nothin’est cretur that ever crawled on the face of the earth.”

“Yes, I know it,” said grandma, “but we must n’t be too hard on him, Lyddy Ann. If the Lord’s tolerated him all these years, seems to me we ought to.”

“I’m willin’ enough to *tolerate* him,” said Lyddy Ann, with a contemptuous sniff, “but that ain’t stuffin’ the lazy cretur up with good-ies. Let him work and earn his mince pies, same’s the rest of us have to, if he wants any, say I.”

“Oh, well, Lyddy Ann, it takes all sorts of folks to make a world, and Mose is one of the

sorts that had to be, I suppose, to make up the variety. His poor family ought not to suffer because he is shiftless. I shall send them down some things. I could n't enjoy my own dinner if I did n't know they had something to eat Thanksgiving day. I wonder if it will answer to send anything to the Widow Pickett and Lucinda. I know they must have hard work to make both ends meet, and I'm afraid they won't have much of a Thanksgiving unless folks do send in things, but I don't know how they'll take it."

"They're poor's Job's turkey," said Lyddy Ann, "but then they're as proud as Lucifer."

"Well, I believe I'll venture it, anyway," said grandma. "They can't do more than send them back again."

The boys spent the better part of the afternoon dispensing grandma's bounty to the very few poor persons in Hackmatack, — a delicate matter, requiring much skill and tact to avoid hurting any one's feelings, for, always excepting Mose Streeter, poverty in Hackmatack went hand in hand with an almost haughty pride and self-reliance, and the boys must make it appear rather a favor to Madam Strong to try some of

her Thanksgiving baking, and eat some of the surplus fowls of the parson's flock.

Supper that night was made remarkable to the children by the fact that each of them had a little fruit-cake (all too small, alas, but vastly better than none), baked for them in tiny scalloped tins by grandma as a reward for their labors. Miss Patty beamed genially around the board. She had finished the boys' suits, and now was, as she said, "goin' to keep Thanksgiving with my own folks, and spend the rest of the week a-visitin' round."

Mr. Strong said nothing, — was evidently in one of his most abstracted moods. To-morrow's sermon was yet far from completion, and Mr. Strong's study lamp would burn to-night far on into the small hours. It was not only allowable for the minister to "preach politics" on Thanksgiving day; it was expected of him. The slavery question had begun to loom up as a national issue no longer to be ignored. John Q. Adams's struggle in Congress for the right of petition had excited heated feeling all over the country. Mr. Strong felt it a solemn duty to take up this burning topic, and to have the courage of his convictions; yet he had no wish to hurt or

offend the Democratic members of his society, many of whom he valued highly, in spite of what seemed to him their dangerous political errors. So the momentous discourse was not to be lightly written.

Miss Patty's tongue ran on, unmindful of the minister's abstraction.

"They say Miss Captain Pratt is goin' to give a big party for Tildy to-morrow night. Have you heerd tell anything about it, 'Rasmus?"

"Oh yes, Miss Patty. I'm going to it"

"Dan's invited too," said Becky.

"Yes, but I'm not going," said Dan.

"For pity's sakes, child, why not? I should spose you 'd be jest crazy to go."

"Oh, I don't want to," said Dan, twisting uneasily on his chair at the mere thought of the dreaded party.

"Dan's afraid of the girls," said 'Rasmus, in a low voice, lest his father should hear. Much talking at the table by the children was not encouraged. The fact that children should be seen and not heard was often impressed on their minds.

Here Mr. Strong, whose mental abstraction could never be safely relied on, suddenly broke forth: —

“What did you say, Erasmus? I did not catch your remark.”

“We were speaking of the party, sir, to-morrow night, at Captain Pratt’s,” said ‘Rasmus in some confusion, while Dan, delighted to have ‘Rasmus caught, suppressed a chuckle with some difficulty, making up for this self-denial by kicking his brother under the table.

Thanksgiving day dawned cold and cloudy, with a keen north wind that cut like a knife; exactly the sort of “nipping and eager air” to make every one ravenously hungry. The Strongs’ house was closed and locked when they all went to church, the fires being carefully banked up with ashes to keep till night. After service the Strong family were all going to Grandma Bullard’s to dine, while Lyddy Ann was going home to stay till Sunday night.

There was nearly as large a congregation as usual, the absence of the women, who were mostly at home preparing dinner, being made up by various young people, and even whole families, who had come home from college and from homes in distant cities, to keep Thanksgiving at the old homesteads scattered over Hackmatack hills. The congregation wore a different aspect

from its usual Sunday air. There was a more worldly look, so to speak, especially among the children, who were evidently full of anticipations of the later observances of the day.

Addison's hymn, from "Sewell's Collection,"

" When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I 'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise,"

was sung in rousing fashion by congregation and choir, — the choir reinforced by several former members at home for the day. Mr. Strong read the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy (listened to by the alert congregation as if a personal message to themselves), and took for his text the last two verses, and his following utterance gave no uncertain sound.

The sermon was considered a wonderful effort by all the Whigs.

" Mr. Strong has really outdone himself," said Squire Drake.

" One of the most powerful discourses I ever heard," said Dr. Robbins. " If that does n't set the Democrats thinking, nothing will. I don't see how they can get around that."

The general opinion of the Democrats was

voiced by Capt Pratt, who said to Calvin Skinner, coming down the aisle, —

“Parson Strong’s a good man, and an able preacher so long as he sticks to the doctrines, but he’d better let politics alone. His logic’s mere bosh and rubbish, sir; I do hate to hear a sensible man make such a fool of himself. In spite of all his flings about the country’s danger from the ‘criminal abuse of power by those high in authority,’ meaning this little flurry about the Bank, I suppose, I can tell him one thing, — the salvation of this country lies in Andrew Jackson’s hands. He’ll pull us through all right, if any one can.”

“That’s so,” said Mr. Skinner. “I’d give more for Andrew Jackson’s little finger than for all the Whigs and Federalists in the country, biled out and simmered down, spite of the parson’s sermon. But it’s Thanksgiving, you know.”

“Yes, yes, this is a free country still, thank the Lord,” said the captain. “The parson’s just as good a right to his opinions as you or I. He does n’t generally force ’em on folks, I’ll say that for him.”

“No. He knows which side his bread is

battered," said Calvin, who referred doubtless to his annual offering of wood.

Meantime the most hearty handshakings and cordial greetings were going on in the vestibule between the returned wanderers and their old friends. Through the crowd, a fine-looking young man, tall, erect, scholarly, edged and squeezed his way to the corner where Priscilla stood.

This was John Drake, Squire Drake's youngest son, home from Harvard College for the Thanksgiving vacation. He and Priscilla had been schoolmates from childhood up. Why, then, should Priscilla blush so furiously, so needlessly, because an old schoolmate wished to say how d'ye do? What more natural?

Perhaps she was aware that John had been careful to select, during service, that corner of his father's pew that commanded the best view of the singers' seat, and seemed to give attention rather to the minister's pretty daughter than to the minister himself. Priscilla hadn't looked at him once; but it is amazing how much a girl can see out of the corner of her eye without looking. Perhaps Priscilla was conscious of Becky, standing open-eyed at her

side, and of Miss Patty's sharp scrutiny across the vestibule.

Madam Strong was so busy shaking hands right and left that she did not observe what was going on; but she felt young Drake's attentions acceptable when, with a courtly grace natural to him, the young man assisted her and Priscilla into the two-seated wagon.

"I must say," she remarked, as they drove off, "it's a comfort to meet such an attentive, mannerly young man as John Drake. He's more like the young men when I was young than most of them now-a-days. He reminds me of your grandfather, Priscilla. Your grandfather was that same build when he was young, — tall, slim, and with that courtly, grand way with him. I wonder if he is going to study for the ministry."

Priscilla, whose beaver bonnet was turned away from grandma, its wearer apparently absorbed in admiring the rail-fence beside the road, said, with some embarrassment, —

"I think so. Yes'm. I'm not sure."

The family wagon being full, Dan had driven off with his uncle Zach Bullard, Grandma Bullard's bachelor son, who lived at home with her,

and carried on the farm under her active supervision. As Uncle Zach and Dan were great friends, they were equally pleased with this arrangement. Uncle Zach drove a spirited young black mare, and they went off at a spanking trot that filled Dan's heart with joy, if the north wind did cut his ears and redden his nose, and almost take his breath away, as they dashed into its very teeth.

"Well, boy, how goes it now-a-days?" asked Uncle Zach.

"All right, Uncle Zach."

"Skated any yet?"

"No, sir. But 'Rasmus and I put our skates into the wagon, and we mean to try it this afternoon. Ki Kellogg says Badger's Pond bears, and a lot of us boys are going over there this afternoon."

"Well, but you must be careful. 'Be sure you're right, *then* go ahead,' is a first-rate rule for skating, as well as in other things. Don't run any risks."

"No, sir. May I drive, Uncle Zach?"

"Yes, but you'll have to keep your wits about you, and a tight hand on the reins, for this mare is a high flier, and no mistake."

“That’s why I like to drive her,” said Dan, taking the reins with delight.

The old Bullard homestead was on top of a high hill, — a large square, white house, with a sloping roof in the back, standing behind two huge old elms, with sweeping boughs. The smoke was going straight up from all its square chimneys to-day, the venetian blinds were drawn up in the parlor, and the whole house wore an aspect of hospitality.

“Seems to me I smell turkey,” said Dan, as he dashed into the yard, just grazing the gatepost in his reckless career.

“Whew!” said Uncle Zach. “A miss is as good as a mile, sometimes. A little more, and you would have had that wheel off. Turkey? I should say so. There’s such a bouncer in the brick oven — been baking ever since breakfast time, and a chicken pie that *is* a chicken pie. I rather think mother aimed to outdo herself this time. You see she knows your Grandmother Strong has the name of being such a good cook, and that puts her right on her mettle. Mother does hate to play on the second fiddle, and its pretty hard work to get ahead of her, at cooking or anything else, when she sets out.”

Here the side door opened, and Grandma Bullard, an energetic-looking old lady, with a big checked apron shielding her best dress, appeared.

"Sakes alive! Zachariah Bullard, did you let that boy drive that mare?"

"Why, of course," said Uncle Zach, not mentioning the little episode of the gate-post.

"Well, it's a mercy both your necks ain't broken. How d'ye do, Daniel? My, how you do favor your mother as you grow older. You're clear Worthington. Come in and warm yourself before your father comes, so you can take his horse for him. He'll be chilled through, I guess, by the time he gets here."

Although old John was a stanch traveller, it was some time before he landed his heavy load at the top of Bullard Hill. By the time Dan had put him in the stable, and given him his Thanksgiving dinner of nice, sweet hay, Uncle Josiah and his family arrived, and then Dr. Robbins and his family. Mrs. Robbins was a niece of Grandma Bullard. These were all the guests expected, as grandma's other son, Jedediah, a minister, was settled near Boston, and could not come home.

Before dinner there was rather an awkward half-hour, for the children at least, when they sat stiffly on the straight-backed chairs, awed by the unaccustomed glories of the best parlor, never opened except on state occasions, and were discussed by all the grown people present. Dan, especially, who was naturally bashful, blushed and twisted on his chair when, having finished Uncle Josiah's Sam and Jimmy, they took him up.

Aunt Clarissa said, "How much Daniel favors the Worthingtons as he grows older."

"Oh, no," said Grandma Strong, who had a prejudice against the Worthingtons. "He's clear Strong. Just look at his nose. It's Erasmus's all over again."

Then every one looked critically at Dan's nose, — a pleasant moment for him.

"Ye-es," admitted Cousin Dorinda, "his nose is a good deal like his father's and his grandfather's too. But he has the Bullard eyes. And round the mouth he certainly does favor the Worthingtons."

Then they all looked at Dan's mouth, while he wriggled about, grinning a bashful smile. Greatly to his relief, and to Becky's too, who

was expecting her turn next, Grandma Bullard now appeared, and invited them all into the dining-room, where a long table was spread, extending its whole length, and presenting a most inviting appearance. No one in town had handsomer old china, or more silver, or nicer glass, or heavier, glossier table-cloths than Grandma Bullard, and all the treasures of all her closets were displayed to-day.

It is to be feared that the attention of the children wandered some during Mr. Strong's long blessing, they were so hungry, and the turkey smelled so aggravatingly appetizing, and was so big and brown, fairly bursting with its own deliciousness. And there was the cranberry jelly, quivering with eagerness to be appreciated, and the towering chicken pie seeming to cry aloud, like Charles Lamb's famous roast pig, "Eat me!" and no one knew how many kinds of vegetables, and pickles, and preserves.

Uncle Zach said he never carved such a tender turkey.

"It just falls to pieces of itself," he said.

Grandma Strong praised everything, especially the chicken pie, and all the company indorsed every word she said, and Grandma Bullard sat

ap proudly behind her best china tea-pot, and looked like a general that has won a victory.

After dinner the girls all helped do the work. Then Grandma Bullard laid aside her big apron and seated herself in the parlor with the other women. The men and boys had gone out to the barns to see the Bullard stock, which was noted the country over. Becky, who was a little shy of her cousins, whom she seldom met as they lived at a distance, buried herself in a book, one of grandma's best books, lying on the parlor table, which usually Becky was not allowed to touch. This was a new book that Uncle Jedediah had lately sent his mother from Boston, — "Tales of the Crusaders," written by one Walter Scott. Becky seized upon it as a starving man might on food, and was soon lost to all around her in the charms of "The Talisman." The other girls stood about, not knowing what to do with themselves.

Presently Becky was rudely roused from the spell of enchantment cast over her by Grandma Bullard's hand on her shoulder.

"Becky," she said, in a low tone. "Becky! Do wake up and do something to amuse your cousins. Take them out to the barns and go

around the place with them. You are more at home here than they, and it is better for you to run around some after eating such a dinner. Besides, it does look so to sit here before all your relatives, with your nose stuck in a book! They'll think you are n't good for anything."

And after Becky and her cousins had gone out, Mrs. Bullard could not help expressing some of her dark forebodings for Becky's future.

"I don't know how Becky's going to turn out, I'm sure. I'm afraid she'll never be very practical, she's so desperate fond of reading."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Grandma Strong, who, however much she herself might berate Becky in private, was bound to defend her reputation in public. "Becky's as nice a little knitter for her age as I ever saw. She's just finished a pair of socks for her father, — toed them off as neatly as any one could. And she can turn a sheet as well as I can myself."

"I'm glad to hear it, I'm sure," said Grandma Bullard, much mollified. "But I do wish she was n't always glued to a book. I hope she won't take to painting."

Grandma Strong prudently said nothing of

Becky's yearnings to be allowed to have her mother's paints and brushes. Perhaps Becky would outgrow that notion.

Grandma Bullard had two big barns, crammed to the eaves with hay, the stalls occupied by great, handsome, red-and-white steers and cows, of good Durham breed. There never was a better place to play hide-and-seek, as Becky knew by experience, and, once begun, she and her cousins soon became well acquainted, and had a jolly time. They played until the corners and aisles of the great barn began to grow dusky, when they all were suddenly agreed it was time to go into the house.

"Why, your cheeks are all as red as Baldwins," said Uncle Zach, pinching Becky's round cheeks as he spoke.

"We're really almost hungry, Uncle Zach," said Becky.

"Yes, it is almost, I guess. There won't be anything more to eat until evening, so you will have to starve, for all I see."

CHAPTER XI.

THANKSGIVING EVENING.

THE boys, meantime, had all gone over to Badger's Pond to try the skating. As they drew near it they saw the pond lying like a great mirror, smooth and shining, down in the hollow among the surrounding hills. Forms were darting swiftly over its shining surface.

"It bears! It bears!" shouted the boys, running down the hill, and hurrying to strap on their skates.

"Hello, 'Rasmus! Hello Dan!" shouted Ki Kellogg, sweeping down towards them. "Hurry up. It's just the best skating you ever saw! Smooth as glass and slippery as — as ice! You can let yourself right out and go like the wind. Hurry up."

And, with a graceful curve, Ki was off again, and vanishing far down the pond.

The boys hardly needed his advice. They

were "hurrying up," and soon were also gliding about on the pond. Those unlucky boys who had no skates slid on the ice, making a fine sliding-track. Sometimes a long row of them ran and went down the track together, each taking hold of the shoulders of the boy in front. Then they gathered dead limbs and brush, and kindled a fire on the edge of the pond, that blazed up high, looking bright and cheerful, as the cloudy November day began to gloom into twilight.

'Rasmus and Ki and others of the older boys had been skating backwards and cutting fancy figures on the ice, trying to outdo each other. Ki declared, —

"I can cut a figure eight backwards, before you can say 'Jack Robinson.'"

"Don't believe you can do it at all," said 'Rasmus.

"You just come down where the ice is clean," said Ki, "and I'll show you whether I can or not."

Dan thought he would push off by himself and practise skating backwards where the boys could n't see him fall, and laugh at him. So he leaned over and dashed away for the farther end

of the pond. As he went on, faster and faster, without conscious effort, it seemed to him as if he were flying. Each stroke grew longer as he glided on so swift, so still, so easily, the bushes on the bank seeming to spin past him.

Around a point at the lower end of the pond that hid him from the boys, he crunched his heels sharply into the ice, with a quick curve coming to a sudden stop. The dash of poetry in Dan's composition was stirred by the scene around him. Overhead the stars were beginning to glimmer faintly. Mt. Zoar loomed up near by, grand and impressive. The autumn wind sighed mournfully through the pines on its wooded sides and along the shore, and waved the bare tree-branches in the waning light. How still it was, how lonely, how solemn! A vague feeling of awe before the mystery of the universe, a sense of God, stole into Dan's boyish soul.

But hark! What sound is that? Confused cries of distress from the other end of the pond greeted Dan's ears. Away he dashed, with longer strides than those that had brought him down. Rounding the point, he saw the boys all crowded around one spot.

"What's the matter?" he cried, as he drew near.

"Ki Kellogg's broken in, and gone under!" was the answer from the agitated boys.

The ice was yet new, and had some thin places, into one of which Ki had gone when absorbed in his fancy eight. The pond was known to be very deep. He had gone down once, come up, tried to grasp the ice and pull out, but it had broken in his hands, and he had gone under again. If the boys should attempt to go near enough to help him, they too would break through.

It was a fearful moment, — only a moment, but seeming an age to the horror-stricken boys. Dr. Robbins's oldest son, Nathan, had dashed up the hill the instant Ki went under. He now came running down with a long rail from the fence. Laying it on the ice he crept cautiously out on it to the hole, watched in breathless anxiety by the other boys. When Ki rose to the top again, he managed to seize him, and being a large, strong boy, his strength doubled by excitement, he succeeded in drawing Ki out.

"Hang on to the rail, Ki; don't get off it," cried Nat, as he backed off the other end, still keeping a firm hold of Ki.

And so, half-creeping, half-pulled along, the dripping, half-drowned Ki was dragged ashore, and the boys' hearts rebounded from the horror of facing death to the highest joy.

Nat, as a doctor's son, took command of the situation.

"The first thing," he said, "is to get him warm and get these wet clothes off him, or he'll catch his death in good earnest."

"Grandma Bullard's is the nearest house," said Rasmus. "We'd best take him up there as quick as we can."

The boys hustled off their own skates and Ki's too, he being too benumbed and confused to manage the wet straps himself, and hurried him off, his teeth already chattering.

Grandma Bullard and her guests were sitting peacefully around the open fire in the twilight, telling stories of old times, and other days, and friends long since dead and gone.

"It's about time to light the candles, I suppose," said grandma, "but it's so pleasant—Sakes alive! what's that?"

There was a great stamping up her back steps, and the sound of many excited voices. Every one rushed out into the kitchen. There

stood Ki, dripping a small pond of water on the floor, shaking all over as if with the palsy, his teeth chattering, his face blue and drawn, a crowd of excited boys around him, all talking together, trying to tell what had happened. But that was entirely unnecessary. Every one knew at once. Every one had always been expecting the boys would yet be drowned in Badger's Pond, — so every one now declared in one breath.

“What a merciful dispensation that Dr. Robbins is here on the spot!” said Grandma Bullard.

Although Ki did not stand high in her good graces, being, in her opinion, altogether too frisky for a deacon's son, — “and such a sainted man as Deacon Kellogg is, too,” as she often said, — she now flew about to save his life as ardently as if he had been the deacon himself.

Soon Ki, enfolded in one of Uncle Zach's shirts, much too big for him, was lying in the downy depths of her feather bed, in flannel sheets through which Grandma Strong had run the hot warming-pan, with a hot footstone at his feet, and buried under a mountain of blankets and comfortables. Dr. Robbins administered a tully powder, and, warmed through,

exhausted, and a little feverish, Ki dropped off to sleep, his last conscious thought being, —

“ I shall lose Tilda Pratt’s party.”

Uncle Josiah’s people, and Dr. Robbins and family now left for home, the doctor saying that he would stop at Deacon Kellogg’s and tell him of Ki’s mishap, and that it was not best to disturb him to-night.

After the guests had gone the boys related all the particulars of the disaster to their two grandmothers, who united in saying that they hoped this would be an awful warning to ’Rasmus and Dan; that they had always “told them so,” and now it had come to pass, exactly as they had always predicted.

After the excitement had calmed down Dan broke a brief silence by saying, —

“ Oh, dear! I almost wish I was Ki.”

“ Why? ” asked every one.

“ Because then I should n’t have to go to the party.”

“ Why, is Dan asked to Tilda Pratt’s party? ” asked Uncle Zach. “ Is n’t he rather younger than the rest? ”

“ Oh,” said ’Rasmus. “ Tilda’s invited Cyrus Dole, and Tertius Bigbee, and some more of the trundle-bed trash.”

Dan's face flamed up. "Trundle-bed trash," indeed! Nothing should now prevent his going to the party.

"'Rasmus," said Grandma Strong, reprovingly, "you should n't speak so. Probably Tilda's asked some of the younger set on account of her cousin, Dolly Meekins."

Dan had noticed Dolly Meekins, Tilda's cousin from Springfield, at church that day in the Pratts' pew, — such a pretty little girl, with curly hair, and an air of city style. The party at once increased in attraction and awfulness.

"It's high time you were moving, boys," said Grandma Bullard. "You're going to be late."

After a little looking over by the two grandmothers, they were pronounced ready to go, having on already their new suits, fresh from the hands of Miss Patty.

"Roll your new trousers up at the bottom so they won't get dirty," said Grandma Strong, as they started off, — a not unnecessary precaution in Dan's case, at least, as his really touched the ground behind.

Becky, who had felt somewhat grieved at not being invited to the party since Dan was, found consolation, first, in having the pleasure of see-

ing John Drake come for Priscilla, to take her to a gathering at his father's house. But best of all was it when, all the party-goers being off at last, the older people settled themselves around the fire to visit in peace. Was the solitary little girl an object of compassion then? Ah, far from it.

Grandma Bullard's parlor boasted the somewhat rare luxury of an astral lamp that burned sperm oil. By the centre table Becky curled herself up with "The Talisman." To the eyes of the others, she sat there, the clear lamp-light falling on her flushed cheek, on her eager eyes that swept up and down the pages; but really she was far away, in the Orient. Palm-trees waved before her eyes, the hot wind of the desert blew on her cheek, Saracen and knight fought before her, in the depths of the hermit's cave she watched the fascinating dwarfs and the mysterious midnight procession, whose chant echoed in her ear. What was an ordinary party compared to such a realm of enchantment as this? And Grandma Bullard, who found it hard to deny anything to Remember's little girl, actually let her take the book home to finish, being careful to say, —

"I let you have it, Becky, because your Grandma Strong speaks so well of your knitting and sewing."

Captain Pratt's house looked brilliant as the boys drew near it, with lights beaming from every window, and chaises dashing up to the door. It was Dan's first party, and his heart began to sink within him, but 'Rasmus's remarks about trundle-bed trash kept him from expressing his feelings to him. Through the windows they could see that the rooms were full. Dan prolonged the scraping of his feet at the door until 'Rasmus said, —

"Come along, Dan. Don't be hanging back that way."

"I'm not hanging back," said Dan, with fast-beating heart, as 'Rasmus gave a lively rat-tat-tat to the brass knocker. The door flew open, and there was no help for it; Dan was embarked on the party.

The buzz and hum of many voices as they went upstairs was dreadful to Dan.

"Wait a minute, 'Rasmus," said he, faintly, as 'Rasmus started to go down. "I want to brush my hair some more."

Finally, as Dan seemed no nearer ready, the

impatient 'Rasmus, who felt that he was losing valuable time, said: "I'm going down. I can't wait any longer. You can come when you get ready."

This brought Dan at once. Their entrance into the parlor was embarrassing even to 'Rasmus. One of those awful pauses that sometimes occur in the first stiff stages of a country party, had evidently fallen on the company. No one could think of anything to say. They sat in solemn rows around the room, the boys one side, the girls the other, in a dead silence.

'Rasmus felt it formidable to enter at this juncture, while Dan thought his feet would tangle together and trip him up before he could make the proper greeting to Mrs. Pratt and Tildy, and get out of sight somewhere. To make it worse, the girls began to giggle. They seemed to be looking at Dan's feet. He glanced down. Alas, he had forgotten to turn down his trousers, rolled up in obedience to grandma's commands, and their brilliant orange-colored cotton lining (dyed with madder by grandma's thrifty hands) was displayed to the general admiration.

Although this little incident quite revived and

animated the party, it was terrible to Dan, who plunged precipitately into a crowd of boys standing near the door. Here he was somewhat comforted to find his friends, Cyrus and Tertius, also in the agonies of their first party. And now Mrs. Pratt, a stout, motherly-looking woman, with a face beaming good-nature, came to the rescue of the party.

"Can't you play something, Tildy?" she said. "Come, you and Tom start up some games. You must n't lose any time."

So they played "Spat 'em out," and "Copenhagen," and "Button, Button," and "Come, Philander, let's be a-marching," and "Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows," and "Running round the chimney," and a variety of other equally delightful games, whose chief point lay in the forfeits, always paid in kisses. Those parents who thought dancing wicked countenanced these games.

In "Spat 'em out," Dan found his seat to be by Dolly Meekins. He felt secretly flattered that she should have chosen him, and realized that he ought to make some conversation. But it is very hard to think of just the right thing to say when you are trying to "make conversa-

tion." So Dan found it. Not an idea came to his rescue. His mind seemed wholly blank. But Dolly relieved him by remarking, —

"We are having very cold weather now."

"Yes, we are," said Dan.

Another pause. Then Dolly said: "Don't you wish it would snow?"

"Yes, I do," said Dan.

He tried hard to think of something appropriate to say back. At last an idea struck him.

"Do you like to coast?" he asked.

"Oh, indeed I do," said Dolly, with animation. "I love it! I am dying to have it snow, so I can try the coasting here, you have such beautiful long hills."

"Yes," said Dan, interested now, and quite forgetting he was making conversation, "we have lots of fun here in winter."

Then he told her all about the funny accident that happened to 'Rasmus last winter, when they were all coasting down Brush Hill. How Dolly laughed, and how her eyes shone, and what pretty dimples she had when she laughed! Dan began to think the party was n't so bad, after all.

Now, too, came the part of the party that

Dan especially enjoyed, — the refreshments. Plates were passed, on each of which were two kinds of pie, mince and pumpkin, large pieces too; then frosted fruit-cake, and finally nuts and apples. Really, this was a magnificent party.

There was great fun naming each other's apples.

“Please name my apple,” said Dolly.

“Tertius Bigbee,” said Dan, snapping Dolly's apple with thumb and fore-finger.

“Tertius Bigbee, indeed!” said Miss Dolly, with a distracting toss of her curls.

Then she snapped Dan's apple, and named it Sophy Briggs, a girl whom Dan did not at all admire. They carefully saved their seeds, and counted them. What a good joke it was when Dolly's apple proved to have four seeds, while Dan's had five; for now they must repeat this doggerel rhyme, supposed to exactly reveal the state of one's affections: —

“One, I love, Two, I love,
 Three, I do, I say;
 Four, I love with all my heart,
 Five, I cast away.”

and so on, ending with —

“Twelve, they marry.”

Dan and his friends dodged all the forfeits possible, and were only comforted in the games, into which they were reluctantly dragged, by the reflection that the other boys could not well laugh at them, being in the same boat themselves. Still, considering the refreshments and all, the party had been a delightful occasion, and every one was sorry when the nine-o'clock bell was heard solemnly booming out from the church belfry near by, saying plainly to the ears of all Hackmatackians abroad, —

“Go home! Go home!”

“Dear me, who would have thought it was so late?” said every one, as they hurried up-stairs for their “things.”

Dan waited in the hall below with the other boys, — not that he had the faintest idea of “seeing a girl home,” but he wanted to see if 'Rasmus would. Sure enough, when the girls all came down in a flock, looking so demure and unconscious, as if there were not a boy within a hundred miles, to Dan's delight he saw 'Rasmus step forth and say to Sybil Ward, —

“May I have the pleasure of seeing you home?”

Then 'Rasmus crooked his arm, and Sybil

took it with bashful consent (a scene often afterwards rehearsed by Dan at home, for Becky's delight, and 'Rasmus's disgust), and they plunged out the door into the agreeable darkness without, closely followed by Dan and his friend Cyrus, who had much fun, dodging along behind the fences and bushes, shadowing 'Rasmus, and making themselves generally obnoxious to him.

When 'Rasmus reached home, at the late hour of half-past nine, Dan was in bed, and sleeping so hard that he even snored a little, almost as naturally as life. This did not save him from the righteous wrath of 'Rasmus, who hauled him out, and was proceeding to "give him what he deserved," when the sound of the scuffle brought their father to the foot of the stairs.

"Boys!" came up a warning voice. "Boys! do not let me hear another sound from you to-night."

"No, sir," replied the meek chorus from above.

Nothing further was heard from the boys that night, but the tangled state of the bedclothes next morning indicated that a cyclone of some magnitude must have swept over the bed during the night.

CHAPTER XII.

SCHOOL BEGINS.

THE Monday after Thanksgiving every one in Hackmatack settled down again to work, the year's chief holiday time being ended. The Strongs were up early. Mr. Strong was to take Priscilla to the Misses Fiske's boarding-school in Keene that day. He would drive her up in the chaise, spend the night with Brother Sullivan, and return the next day.

All was bustle and flying about at the minister's. Grandma was giving Priscilla many last cautions and pieces of advice adapted to the new career on which she was about entering. Priscilla would not be at home until the school closed in July, and as it cost a shilling to send a letter to Keene, few would be written, unless there were an opportunity to send by a friend travelling in that direction. Shillings were none too plenty in the minister's family. Mr. Strong's

salary was only four hundred dollars. The small farm, carried on by himself and the boys, enabled them to live comfortably and keep up the decent appearance expected of the minister's family. But close economy was practised, and Mr. Strong could not have sent Priscilla to the Misses Fiske's had not grandma, who was determined Priscilla should have every advantage, largely borne the expense.

"Now, Priscilla," said grandma, "I do hope you will make the most of your privileges. I want you to be fitted to take a fine place as a teacher, and, more than that, to be a lady among ladies. Misses Fiske's school is celebrated far and near, and you will meet girls from the first families there. Learn all you can, and keep your eyes open and pick up all the new ideas you can."

"I certainly will, grandma. I realize how much you and father are doing for me."

"If you should bring home the silver salt-spoons, I should be dreadfully pleased," continued grandma.

"I shall try very hard," said Priscilla, who also felt the salt-spoons a desirable prize. It was the Misses Fiske's custom, at the close of

the school, to present a pair of silver salt-spoons to each young lady who had not left anything on her plate at table during the year to which she had helped herself.

As soon as breakfast was over 'Rasmus brought old John and the chaise to the side door. Then he and Dan brought out Priscilla's trunk, a hair-covered trunk, with her initials in brass nails on one end, and strapped it underneath the chaise.

The day was raw and bleak, and Priscilla was so bundled for her long ride, having on grandma's big cloak with the cape over everything else, loaned for the journey, that it was with difficulty she climbed into the chaise.

"I feel like an Egyptian mummy," she said, laughing, but with tears in her eyes. It was her first going away from home, and she could not leave the dear old parsonage and all its inmates for so long without an uncomfortable tug at her heart-strings, glad as she was to go to boarding-school.

"You'll need every stitch you have on before you get there," said grandma, "riding to the north in such a cutting wind as this."

Lyddy Ann brought out the foot-stove and

put it in the bottom of the chaise. When the coals within died out Mr. Strong would stop at a wayside tavern, or some friendly farmhouse, and renew them.

"The air feels like snow," said grandma, "and it's high time for winter to set in. I do hope, Erasmus, you won't be caught in a big snow-storm before you get back."

"Don't be anxious about me, mother," said Mr. Strong. "I shall set out for home early to-morrow morning, and old John is sure to bring me through all right."

"Good-by, good-by!" now came from all sides. The chaise drove out of the yard, leaving the little group which stood looking after it feeling rather lonely and forlorn. Priscilla was the first of the children to leave home, and there was already a perceptible gap in the home circle.

But grandma was not one much given to sad or idle musings, especially on a Monday morning.

"Come, come," said she, briskly. "We mustn't be standing around this way. There's lots to do this morning. Fly round, boys, and finish your chores. Then hunt up your books

and get ready for school. Becky, hurry up and make the beds. Have you found your arithmetic yet? You said Saturday you could n't find it. I'll be out to help you, Lyddy Ann, as soon as I pack the children off to school. I guess I'd better make some new gingerbread for supper. The schoolmaster's coming here to-night."

"Is the new teacher going to board here first?" asked Becky, in a complaining tone.

"Yes, the committee asked me to take him first, and it makes no difference to me when he comes," said grandma.

"Oh, dear," said Becky, "I hate to have him come."

"So do I," said Dan. "It's as bad as going to school all the time."

"Oh, well," said grandma, "your new teacher's a very different kind of person from that Blodgett, by all I hear tell. He is a son of old Col. Wyatt of Rowe. The Wyatts are connections of mine. I have n't seen James since he was a little boy, but I've heard that he is an unusually promising young man."

"Well, I shall be glad when he gets through boarding here, all the same," said Dan, and Becky heartily agreed with him.

Although the presence of the schoolmaster in the family circle was always signaled by unaccustomed luxuries, such as quince preserves for tea, in place of the usual boiled-cider apple-sauce, even sometimes by some of the sacred fruit-cake itself, yet these advantages were more than offset in the children's opinion by the sense of restraint in being constantly under the teacher's eye. Moreover, it was always considered an opportunity for them, not to be lost, to do extra ciphering evenings, when the master was there to help them.

Dan's feelings were mixed in having school begin again. It was a release from the wood-pile and other farm work, and so far agreeable. Then the boys always had great sport together at recess and noonings. Connected with these pleasures was the drawback of lessons. Dan was bright enough. He liked to read, and he learned easily when he gave his mind to it. But at present he was chiefly a lively, healthy young animal, bubbling over with irrepressible activity, with little aspiration toward learning. His father, who had hoped to make one son a minister, wanted to send him to college, but as Dan's ideas of the pleasures of a college career

were chiefly founded on the Latin Accidence, which he did not like, it failed to attract him.

'Rasmus was a good boy, studied faithfully, and behaved well, but his turn was for business rather than scholarship; Becky was the book-worm of the family.

"If Becky had only been a boy," her father sometimes thought, "she would have been the minister."

To Dan's amazement, Becky had teased her father to let her study Latin.

"Becky Strong!" he exclaimed, "you don't know what you're talking about! The idea of a girl's studying Latin! I guess a few pages of the Latin Accidence will take the zeal out of you."

"I can learn it just as well as you can," said Becky.

"Pooh, pooh," said grandma; "I never heard of a girl's studying Latin."

"'Whistling girls and crowing hens
Always come to some bad ends.'"

Her father rather tolerated than encouraged Becky's aspirations, but did not refuse to hear her recite when Becky brought the Latin Acci-

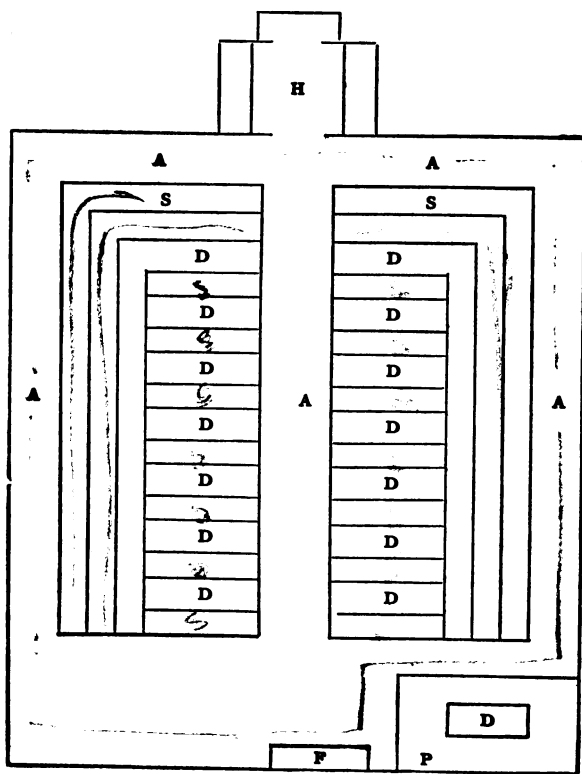
dence to him, and proudly rattled off "Musa, Musæ," and the rest.

'Rasmus, Dan, and Becky walked up to school, Dan carrying the large basket containing their noon luncheon of bread and butter, pie, doughnuts and cheese, and great, round, rosy apples, all of which would taste very good to the hungry children by noon time.

The Centre schoolhouse was a square, one-story building, painted yellow with white trimmings, perched on a pile of rocks, on the hill near the church. Near it lay a huge granite boulder, half as big as the schoolhouse itself, over which the children often climbed, and down whose sides they often slid. The roof of the school-house rose from the four sides to a point in the centre, which was crowned with a small cupola, whose top was graced by a weather-vane, bent and twisted from being the sure mark of many snowballs in many winters.

On each side of a small, projecting hall were three deep shelves, one side for the girls' garments, the other for the boys'. An aisle ran around the room, behind the seat on which sat the older pupils. This seat had no back, but ingenious boys sometimes brought a board of

PLAN OF HACKMATACK CENTRE SCHOOLHOUSE.



H. Entrance hall
A. Aisles.
D. Desks.

S. Seat.
P. Platform.
F. Fireplace.

the right length which they leaned against the wall behind them, against which they could rest. Before them ran a desk, with a shelf for books underneath. These same ingenious boys had attached drawers of their own making under these shelves, with locks, where their valuables were kept under lock and key, much to the envy of less fortunate schoolmates.

The space in front of the long bench was filled in by shorter ones for the younger pupils. On two low seats in front of all, sat the little a-b-c scholars, swinging their legs, and roasting in the full blaze of the huge fire which in winter roared up the great brick fireplace with a sheet-iron front, which was built out into the room. The girls sat one side of the room, the boys the other. On the platform beside the fireplace stood the teacher's desk, and sat the teacher when he was not promenading the aisles. The walls were bare, rough plaster, much gouged by the same jackknives that had cut and slashed desks and seats until there seemed danger that the entire interior wood-work might eventually disappear before the taste for sculpture so alarmingly developed in young Hackmatack. In the open space around the fireplace the long classes stood to recite.

Such was the Hackmatack Centre school-house, where several generations of useful men and women had obtained all or most of their education. Children were pouring in towards it this Monday morning along all the roads meeting at the Centre, mostly on foot, as a mile, or even two, was not considered much of a walk in pleasant weather, even for the little three-year-olds, who attended the summer school, and would come to the winter term until deep snows and big drifts prevented. It was a delight for the widely scattered country children to meet each other again, and cheerful greetings resounded on all sides, as they drew near the school-house.

“ Hello, 'Rasmus ! ”

“ Hello, Ki. Got dry yet? ”

“ Hello, Dan,” said Tertius. “ I say, Dan, I bet it's going to snow to-day. If it does, let's build a fort, and play Indian the way we did last winter.”

“ All right,” said Dan. “ I choose to be Indian chief.”

“ Pooh, what are you little fellows talking about? ” said big Joe Root. “ I guess it's going to take some one bigger than you both put together to be Indian chief.”

"Oh, Becky," said Persis Billings and Experience or Peri Drake, Becky's particular friends, running to meet her. "We're so glad you've come. Let's sit together, and let's hurry in and choose a good seat, before all the big girls come. I wonder if we can't sit in the back seat this winter. You know Priscilla and Thankful Phinney won't be here this year."

Becky, Peri, and Persis hurried into the schoolroom, and put their books on the desk of the coveted long back seat. But when Sybil Ward, and Luella Pettit, and Relief Kellogg, and others of the big girls came, Becky and her friends were soon given to understand that they had unduly promoted themselves, and must go down lower.

By nine o'clock forty children had assembled in the school-room, ranging in age all the way from the a-b-c class to the tall young men and maidens of eighteen or so, who would finish their schooling this winter. All were talking and laughing, and the babel of voices was something alarming; so much too large for the size of the room that it threatened to lift the roof.

Suddenly a hush falls on the babel,—a dead

silence reigns. The door opens, and a young man enters. It is the new master!

All eyes are turned curiously on him. The scholars know full well that much of their happiness or misery for the next ten weeks lies in the hands of this same young man. No wonder they scan him eagerly, to learn, if possible, their probable fate in advance.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW MASTER.

THE new master advanced to the desk on the platform, placed a bell and some books upon it, and turned to face his pupils. They saw before them a tall, slender young man, about twenty years old, six feet high and an inch or two over, with a delicate aquiline nose, keen blue eyes, a high forehead over which carelessly fell waving, light-brown locks, and a pleasant mouth,—the whole face rarely expressive of refinement and intelligence.

The scholars felt attracted to him at once. His voice completed the charm,—so ringing and cheery was its tone, so refined its accent, as he said:—

“Good morning, all. I am glad to meet you. I hope we may have a very pleasant and profitable winter together. Take your seats now, and we will read in the Bible.”

The Bible reading over, Mr. Wyatt went about the room taking the names and ages of his pupils, and trying to classify them, a task by no means easy. There were six classes in reading alone, ranging from the tiny ones who read in the spelling-book, to the older classes in "Scott's Lessons," and the "Columbian Orator." But Mr. Wyatt finally succeeded in bringing something like order out of the chaos, and before school closed at night the classes were formed, lessons assigned, and school might be considered fairly launched.

As the scholars studied the new master, so he, on his side, carefully scanned the boys and girls before him, to see what material he had to work upon. On the back seat sat the older pupils, among them young men almost or quite as old as the master himself. They worked on farms in the summer, and improved the leisure of winter to add something to their stock of knowledge. The previous winter, these large boys, after enduring a long series of cruelties and persecutions from a petty tyrant named Blodgett, mostly vented, however, on the younger pupils, had risen at last in righteous rebellion, seized Blodgett by main force, carried

him out of doors, and, there being a fine slippery crust at the time, had sent him coasting down the steep side-hill back of the schoolhouse, at whose bottom he found himself before he hardly realized what had happened to him.

This had closed the winter term, the people of the district feeling that the boys were justified by the conduct of Blodgett. This year they had determined to pay more and secure a better teacher. Mr. Wyatt was a student of Williams College, and came most highly recommended by the faculty. He had heard of the troubles of the previous winter, but had no fears for himself as he looked about on the big boys.

“The gentleman in them will respond to the gentleman in me,” he thought to himself.

After these older pupils came the rank and file of the school, the boys and girls ranging from eight to twelve, a lively, wide-awake-looking, restless set, evidently much more interested in having “fun” than in books. Among this set Mr. Wyatt’s attention was soon attracted to a boy of about eleven, with large gray eyes that were dull and listless when they rested on his book, but dark and sparkling when any mischief

or diversion was on foot. He soon learned that this was Parson Strong's son, Dan.

In the afternoon, when the fourth class in spelling were standing on the floor, a class so large that it formed a right angle and extended along both sides of the open space, Mr. Wyatt became aware of some commotion in the ranks at his left. He appeared not to notice it, but soon saw, from the corner of his eye, Dan sticking a pin into Cyrus Dole, who stood next him. Cyrus jumped and cried, "Oh!" the other boys laughed, while Dan alone stood the image of soberness.

"Daniel," said Mr. Wyatt, looking at him with a twinkle in his eye, "I am glad to see one model boy in this class. You are an example to the class. You may come up here and take my place. Put out the words," he said pleasantly, pressing the spelling-book into Dan's reluctant hands.

Mr. Wyatt sat down and surveyed the class at his ease, while Dan, feeling that the laugh was now turned against him, stood on the platform and gave out the words.

"Very much obliged to you, Daniel," said Mr. Wyatt, when the class had finished. "I

shall know where to look for help now, if I need it. I suppose I shall have to stay after school to-night and hear you spell, that you may not lose your lesson."

All this in the kindest tone, with the air of conferring a favor on Daniel, who hardly knew how to take it. Blodgett would have feruled Cyrus for crying out, and him on Cyrus's accusation, and as many more boys for laughing as he felt inclined.

Dan was unusually studious the rest of the day. When, late in the afternoon, Tertius Bigbee telegraphed him to look out the window, and Dan saw a few snow-flakes gently stealing down, overjoyed as he felt, he was careful to suppress any display of his feelings till he should get out-doors, keeping one eye, as it were, on Mr. Wyatt, while he glanced furtively out the window with the other at the fast increasing snow-storm.

When four o'clock came at last, and the master said, "School is dismissed," the boys and girls almost tumbled out of the room in their eagerness to get out-doors. They did not forget, however, to turn at the door and make their "manners" to the master as they left, — the

girls in hasty dips called courtesies, the boys in all varieties of twitches and bobs of the head that might pass for bows, as they darted eagerly out, wild with joy over the first snow.

The ground was already white, and the fast-falling flakes promised to make good sleighing before morning, if they continued. Even now the boys could scrape up enough snow to wash one another's faces, and to throw at the girls, and the sound of their merry shouts and loud laughter echoed back into the deserted school-room, where were now only Mr. Wyatt, Dan, and 'Rasmus.

The job of building the schoolroom fire mornings was let out to one of the boys for the winter, they bidding for the privilege. Erasmus had the contract this winter, having made the lowest bid. He was to have ninety cents and the ashes. As the great logs that were burned in the big fireplace made many barrels of the best wood-ashes before spring, which Erasmus would sell either to his father or some of the farmers at a good price, the pay, in that day of low prices and little money, was more liberal than it seems. Erasmus, who was a born financier and business man, would clear a handsome sum,

to add to that for which he already held his father's note, at six per cent.

"Erasmus," said Mr. Wyatt, "you can bank up the fire now, if you want to go. Daniel and I will not be here long. You know your lesson pretty well, don't you, Daniel? I see you have been studying hard."

"Yes, sir," said Dan, confidently.

He rattled off the words almost before Mr. Wyatt could pronounce them, finishing by the time Erasmus had the back-log well banked up. Then they started off home together. Erasmus took the master's carpet-bag. Mr. Wyatt carried several books, and an odd-looking package in thick brown paper that at once attracted Dan's curiosity.

"That is my flute," said Mr. Wyatt.

A flute! Dan's eyes shone. He had never heard a flute. He had seen one once, when it had been his high privilege to drive his grandmother over to Greenfield shopping. While his grandmother was in Miss Filley's buying a new bonnet, he had rambled around, seeking a store where musical instruments were kept, over whose advertisements in the columns of the "Greenfield Gazette" he had often gloated. He found

it at last, and there he had stood, eagerly looking in the window at the violins, the violoncellos, at what he knew, by the description his father had given him, must be a flute, and at some wonderful, nameless brass instruments.

Who can tell what it was to Dan, merely to look at a violin? The beautiful swelling front, the delicately arched sides, the rich, mellow color, the strings running over the bridge and attached to the mysterious keys, all filled Dan's soul with intense admiration and longing. He would certainly buy a violin of his own as soon as he could save enough money. But now he felt that a new world of delight was about opening to him, in the prospect of actually hearing a flute.

"Can you play on it, Mr. Wyatt?" he asked, eagerly.

"After a fashion," said Mr. Wyatt, laughing. "I will give you a specimen of my skill this evening, if agreeable to your family."

"Oh! they will all like it ever so much," said Dan. "Shall I carry the flute for you, Mr. Wyatt?"

Mr. Wyatt, seeing what a privilege it would be to him, let Dan carry the flute. After that

Dan hardly knew whether it snowed or not, although the driving flakes whirled in their faces so fast they could hardly see, and whitened their hair and clothes, and stuck on their eyelashes, until they looked like moving snowmen.

Grandma met them at the door, welcomed Mr. Wyatt heartily, and swept the snow off them before letting them into the house.

They found Mr. Strong at home, he having arrived, fortunately, soon after the storm set in. At the tea-table the children enjoyed not only the hot biscuit, the quince preserves, and the new gingerbread, but also the conversation, which was unusually animated. Grandma was full of inquiries about her Rowe friends, while Mr. Strong had much to ask about Williams College, and Mr. Wyatt was an interesting talker, telling many a good story that the children enjoyed quite as much as their elders.

Indeed, the new master seemed to have the faculty of making himself equally agreeable to old and young. Becky could not help noticing, as they sat by the study fire after supper, that Snoozer, after rubbing his sleek fur against Mr. Wyatt's trousers a while, continued the

acquaintance by mounting into his lap, and composing himself serenely there for a nap. Few were the strangers that Snoozer thus honored with his familiarity. He was not repulsed. Mr. Wyatt stroked him, and went on talking.

"Don't feel obliged to hold that cat, Mr. Wyatt," said grandma. "He's always around where he is n't wanted."

"Oh, I like cats," said Mr. Wyatt, with a smile at Becky, as if he knew that Snoozer was her special property.

Becky thought him the nicest teacher she ever knew, and resolved to win his good opinion by having better lessons than any one in her class.

At the first gap in the conversation Dan asked eagerly: "Will you please play on your flute now, Mr. Wyatt?"

"Why, I suppose we all have a little studying to do first, have n't we?" said Mr. Wyatt. "I know I have, if I keep up with my class in college this winter, as I mean to. After a while I will play with pleasure."

The children all went out into the keeping-room, and gathered with their books and slates around the large table, where two candles

burned. Mr. Wyatt produced some formidable looking Greek books, and sat down with them.

"You need not be afraid to interrupt me, if you need any assistance," he said.

"Do you like to study Greek?" asked Dan, looking with distaste at the mystic black characters of Mr. Wyatt's books.

"Very much," said Mr. Wyatt. "But if I did not, I should study it all the same."

"I don't see why," said Dan. "You don't have to if you don't want to, do you?"

"I do, if I become an educated man, which is what I hope for," said Mr. Wyatt, with a sudden gleam in his blue eyes of the secret ambition that fired his soul.

Dan was puzzled. He could not understand any one's studying who was not obliged to. His own ambition was as yet sleeping. However, he now studied hard, as did Erasmus and Becky, for all anticipated the novel pleasure of hearing a flute.

The lessons were learned much sooner than usual. Then the students adjourned to the study. Mr. Strong laid aside his book, Madam Strong sat up straighter than ever, and knit faster, if possible, and all were eager attention

as Mr. Wyatt took out the flute, moistened the joints, put them together, and began. He played many sweet and simple airs. Oh, what liquid sweetness, what ravishing harmonies did he draw forth from the wonderful pipe! Daniel had never heard anything like it. Tears stood in his eyes. It was an almost painful rapture. It seemed as if the music would draw the soul out of his body.

Mr. Wyatt marked the boy's absorbed look, his flushed face, his sparkling eyes.

"Should you like to learn to play the flute, Daniel?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir," cried Dan.

"Well, I will give you some lessons while I am here. I think you would learn easily."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Wyatt," said Dan, hardly able to credit his good fortune.

"Yes," said his grandmother, "Dan's all music. He is like my brother William in that. But his father's very fond of music, too."

"Yes," said Mr. Strong; "I agree fully with Martin Luther. You may remember he said, 'Music is one of the fairest of God's gifts to man. It is the best refreshment to a troubled soul; the heart as you listen recovers its peace.'"

He said he would allow no man to be a schoolmaster who could not sing."

"Then I am well qualified, according to Luther's standard," said Mr. Wyatt, laughing, "for I can certainly sing."

Indeed, the schoolmaster's strong, sweet tenor proved a most acceptable addition to the Hackmatack choir that winter.

It was now time for the evening devotions. After the Bible reading and prayer, when Mr. Strong played the hymns on the organ for the singing, Mr. Wyatt accompanied him on his flute. It made the sweetest music the children had ever heard, and their voices soared up, fresh and strong on its wings, in "Amsterdam."

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings, —
Thy better portion trace;
Rise, from transitory things,
Towards Heaven thy native place:
Sun and moon and stars decay,
Time shall soon this earth remove;
Rise, my soul, and haste away
To seats prepared above."

They seemed literally to soar with the melody almost to Heaven's gate. Young as they were, they half knew what grandma meant when, as she wiped her eyes at the close of the hymn, she

murmured, "A foretaste of Heaven, a foretaste of Heaven."

Dan went to bed resolving to work very hard, and save every penny he earned, to buy himself a flute as soon as possible.

"I wish Mr. Wyatt would board here the whole term," he said to Erasmus, as they undressed.

"I wish so too," said Erasmus. "He's the nicest teacher I ever saw."

"I should say so," said Dan, plunging into bed, and drawing the flannel sheet and blankets well up over his ears as the nine-o'clock bell boomed solemnly out through the storm.

In about five minutes they were fast asleep, and Dan was dreaming that he owned a beautiful flute, with silver keys, just like Mr. Wyatt's.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW WORLD.

WHILE every one had been sleeping peacefully, the snow-flakes had been coming down softly all through the long, still night, and when Erasmus awoke the next morning, and scratching a hole through the white, frosted pane, peeped out, it was to look upon a new world, apparently fresh from the hand of its Creator. In the dim light of the gray dawn he saw pure white snow covering the ground but yesterday so bare and brown, weighing down the branches of the spruce-trees in the yard, hanging in heavy masses on all the roofs, lading the well-sweep, capping fantastically all the posts.

It had stopped snowing, and the clouds were breaking up and floating off, — those in the east faintly reddened by the sunlight striking upon them from far below the horizon.

“Wake up, Dan,” cried Erasmus, shaking his brother. “There’s more than a foot of snow on the ground, and we shall have to work like fun between now and school-time. Wake up! It’s time now you were starting the kitchen fire.”

Thus exhorted, Dan yawned, and stretched, and slowly came to life again. But once out of bed, he was wide-awake enough.

“My, what a lot of it!” he exclaimed, peeping through the hole at the snow while he hurried into his icy-cold garments. “What fun! There’ll be some coasting at last. But this is the end of the skating.”

“Oh, the January thaw will fix that all right,” said Erasmus. “But hurry up, Dan. We’ve lots of shovelling to do this morning.”

Erasmus went down into the dark kitchen, took a coal from under the ashes, blew it to a blaze, and lighted a stub of a candle, which he put in the tin lantern, and started for the barn. As he plodded along through the trackless snow, the light straggling through the holes of the tin lantern made a dancing, rosy pattern on the whiteness all about.

He found the barn world wide-awake, dark as

it was. The roosters were crowing lustily, old John whinnied a loud welcome from his stall, and the hungry cows greedily seized the hay he threw into their mangers.

Dan, having started the fires at the house, came out and helped milk, and fed the pigs and hens. Then the boys went to work digging paths. Becky came out with a broom, ostensibly to sweep the snow from the side steps. The snow was too heavy to be swept. Becky knew it, but she wanted a share of the fun.

The boys were digging away with might and main, the snow flying right and left from their shovels, their cheeks red and eyes bright from this exercise in the pure, snowy air. Suddenly a soft snowball hits Dan's cheek, and another knocks off Erasmus's cap, whereat Becky giggles.

"Ah, is that what you're up to?" cried Erasmus.

"We'll soon give you enough of that," said Dan.

Dropping their shovels, the boys hastily snatched handfuls of snow, and pelted Becky so soundly with snow-balls much more scientifically made than her own that she would soon

have had to beat a retreat into the house, had not Lyddy Ann come out the kitchen door to her rescue. This diverted the enemies' fire, and gave Becky a better chance. But finally Dan seized her, and washed her face in the cold snow till it glowed like fire, as she fled into the house, laughing and panting. Grandma meantime stood at the window, looking out and laughing at the fun.

Every one came to the breakfast-table in good spirits, animated by the cheer and brightness of the new world without.

"I am always glad to see the snow come," said Mr. Strong. "We can feel then that we have settled down to winter in good earnest. The ground is covered and protected, and it is so much easier and pleasanter getting about on runners in cold weather. The farmers can now begin to haul their wood to town."

"I always enjoy the snow," said Mr. Wyatt. "Those tropical lands where snow never falls are all very well in poetry, but they would never suit me. The great charm of our northern clime is the marked change of seasons. I should not enjoy a perpetual summer."

"The good Lord knows what we need," said

grandma, "and he will send it, whether we like it or not. For my part, I have great respect for his orderings. He knows best."

"Yes," said Mr. Strong, reverently; "'he giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?'"

After breakfast Erasmus hurried off to start the schoolroom fire, while Dan finished the paths, and brought in wood enough to pile high all the wood-boxes in the house.

"You had better harness old John and ride to school this morning," said Mr. Strong to Dan. "The paths will not be broken out, and it will be hard walking."

The sun was shining brightly, and it was an ideal winter's morning, a sparkling gem of a morning, as Mr. Wyatt, Becky, and Dan glided along to school in the sleigh behind old John, the big bells on his neck ringing a sort of jolly jog-jog accompaniment to his walk; for he could not trot until he reached the turnpike, having to break his own path to that point.

How lovely the world was this morning! Far and near spread a trackless, spotless sheet of purest white snow, over wide meadows, over

the hills, glistening and sparkling in the bright sunlight enough to put out one's eyes. The bare tree-branches, the little bushes, even the fences, laden with snow, became things of beauty. Mt. Zoar towered up grandly in its snowy mantle against the deep blue sky, its white expanse broken only by dark patches of pine and hemlock woods.

"What a beautiful place Hackmatack is!" said Mr. Wyatt, — "a typical New England town."

"I think it's the pleasantest place in the world," said Dan, who had a strong love for home and home surroundings. When he was a very little boy he discovered, as he thought, that the highest place in the sky was directly over his father's house, and he felt himself highly privileged to live right under the dome, pitying those unfortunate boys who lived far out under the edge, where the sky almost touched the ground. But one Sunday, when his father went on an exchange to Athol, he took Dan with him, — a great event in the little fellow's life, he having never before been so far from home. As they drove on and on, to Dan's amazement the dome travelled with them, and was still overhead even when they reached

Athol, ten miles away. He perceived that the boys in Athol lived under the dome too. So Dan's mind was enlarged by travel.

But Hackmatack was still the pleasantest place on earth to him, and when they sang "America" at church Dan always felt it meant Hackmatack, when he sang with all his might, —

"My native country, thee, —
Land of the noble free, —
Thy name I love:
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above."

Was not Mt. Zoar a "templed hill"?

"Long may home be the pleasantest place in the world to you," said Mr. Wyatt.

Now they turned into the turnpike, and soon overtook parties of school-children plodding merrily along through the snow to school.

"Can we ride, Dan? Give us a ride?" they cried.

"Yes, hop in, — all of you that can get in," said Dan.

Those who could not get into the sleigh hung on the runners behind, and so old John had as

heavy a load as he could well draw when he rounded up to the schoolhouse door.

Dan turned him around, heading him for home, and old John went straight home by himself, turning in at the gate, and going under the shed beside the corn-house, where he waited patiently until Mr. Strong came out to unharness him. If he chanced to meet any sleighs he dully turned out. The children, and indeed every one who met him, knew the minister's horse and his ways, and that he perfectly understood his own business, and so did not interfere with him. At night Mr. Strong harnessed him, and started him up the road towards the schoolhouse. Erasmus or Dan, knowing he was due, would be on the look-out for him at the schoolhouse, and so the children would ride home again. Many and many a time did old John travel the road to and from the schoolhouse alone, never loitering by the way, or betraying the trust reposed in him. Well might grandma say, as she often did, —

“Old John knows more than half the folks. I'm sure I don't know what we should do if anything happened to him. He is worth his weight in gold.”

216 *Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

An immense fire of logs was blazing in the big fireplace, and roaring up the broad chimney as if it would suck up into that black cavern the little fellows on the front seat, whose faces roasted in its heat, while the young folks in the back seat were kicking their feet together, and blowing warm breath on their fingers to partially thaw them, stiff from contact with icy slates and pencils.

Every one was animated by the snow and the bright morning, and there was a great stamping off of snow in the entry, and a good deal of good-natured noise and tussling, in doors and out. But when Mr. Wyatt rang the bell the scholars promptly took their seats, and order reigned at once. The whole school wore a look of cheerful alertness. They liked the new master, and were ready to work in harmony with him. If Dan felt any of his native promptings towards mischief, he restrained them, remembering the promised flute lessons.

Mr. Wyatt astonished the first class in arithmetic by saying, "I have ordered a blackboard made for the use of the arithmetic classes. It will be done to-day. Daniel, this noon I should like to have you and Cyrus go over to Mr.

Newton's carpenter-shop and get the blackboard."

"Yes, sir, we will," said both boys, with alacrity.

A blackboard! What could that be, they wondered. Such a thing had never been seen or heard of in Hackmatack.

Great was the excitement and curiosity of the scholars at noon when Dan and Cyrus, full of importance, came bringing in a large, square blackboard, which Mr. Wyatt hung on the wall, from a stout iron hook sent for the purpose by Mr. Newton. Then he produced some lumps of chalk from his desk, and explained the use of the board to the interested pupils standing around.

Young people like novelties, and so the blackboard lent an entirely new charm to arithmetic. In fact, Mr. Wyatt's whole method of teaching arithmetic was different from anything in their experience. Hitherto, if they could rattle off the rules glibly, and do the "sums," their teachers had been perfectly satisfied. But Mr. Wyatt was always asking, "*Why* do you do thus and so?" and giving and requiring reasons for every process. It had never occurred to the children before that there were any reasons for these

mysterious operations. They were to be done thus and so because the rule said so.

Becky, who had always "hated" arithmetic as much as she "loved" the more interesting studies, was astonished to find herself actually liking the despised lesson, now that she understood it and saw a method in its apparently whimsical requirements. The blackboard was a positive addition to her pleasure in life. The wide scope for her love of drawing presented by its comparatively vast area led her to produce wonderful chalk pictures at recess that were the admiration of all the other little girls.

Mr. Wyatt soon announced that he should hold an occasional ciphering school evenings. What with the six reading classes, each of which had also a long spelling lesson, and each of which must recite twice a day, and what with the writing lessons, when Mr. Wyatt had to set the copies and make all the scholars' pens from quills, or mend the old ones, and what with all the other lessons, there was all too little time for arithmetic. Mr. Wyatt said, —

"We will hold our first ciphering school next Thursday evening. Each of you must bring a candle to light the room. We will try to begin

promptly at half-past six. That will give us two solid hours for ciphering."

When the children went home and reported this the parents were delighted. The farmers particularly liked to have their big boys expert in figures, and the ten weeks of winter term were all the schooling these boys had after they were ten or eleven years old. When Medad Billings met Deacon Kellogg the next day in the store he said, —

"I tell you what, deacon, we've got the best master this winter we ever had in Hackmatack. I suppose you've heard tell about the ciphering school?"

"Yes," said the deacon. "A first rate idea. I never knew my Hilkiah take to his books the way he does this winter. He really acts as if he liked to study. I think, Medad, the parents had better raise enough money to pay for two weeks extra school this term, seeing we have got hold of such a good master."

"I think so too," said Medad; "I'm willing to do my part."

The other parents of the district falling gladly in with the deacon's idea, the money was easily raised to prolong the term to twelve weeks.

Thursday the children were all animation over the expected ciphering school in the evening. Those who lived at a distance were either invited home to tea by friends living in the Centre, or brought their suppers with them, eating them jovially by the light of the big, roaring fire in the fireplace, on which they heaped fresh logs, to have a good permanent fire for the evening. Then they refreshed themselves by coasting and snowballing until Mr. Wyatt was seen coming up the hill with the Strongs and Ki Kellogg and his sister Relief, or "Lefy," as she was usually called, who had taken tea at the minister's.

At the tea-table grandma said: "I don't think Becky ought to go up to the schoolhouse to-night. She's too young to be out evenings so late, and it's too hard for her to walk way up there again."

"Oh, grandma!" burst out Becky, in a tone of anguish. Her face flushed, her eyes filled, and she hastily left the table, sobbing.

"Dear me!" exclaimed grandma, "I never expected to live to see Becky crying to cipher! The age of miracles has come again. I don't know what you've done to the children, I'm

sure, Mr. Wyatt. They seem to be transmogri-fied. I suppose even Dan here wants to cipher."

"Yes ma'am, indeed I do," said Dan, with sparkling eyes.

"I think you had best let Becky go this evening, Madam Strong," said Mr. Wyatt. "I will take good care of her."

"Well, may be I had, seeing her heart's so set on 't," said grandma, relenting.

She went into the study, where she found Becky lying on the hearth-rug under her mother's picture, in deep woe, her beloved Snoozer clasped in her arms, and her wet face buried in his soft fur. Her tears were soon dried when she learned that she was to be allowed to go with the others, and she was the gayest one of the little company that climbed the hill toward the schoolhouse.

It was a clear, cold winter's night, the snow squeaking under their feet, and the stars sparkling brilliantly overhead. Along the northern horizon flickered the Northern Lights, streaking brightly up half-way to the zenith. It was a great novelty to Becky to be out in the evening, and she had a sense of wild gayety and dissipation, when she saw the lights streaming out

from the store and the tavern, and several sleighs dashed by them with jingling bells, the runners creaking for cold along the smooth-worn snow of the Centre. The church was all ablaze too, light streaming out from every window into the night, a brilliant spectacle in Becky's eyes.

The Peace Society was holding a meeting there to-night. One of the leading apostles of the anti-war cause, the celebrated Dr. Dodge from Boston, was to address the meeting to-night, so the attendance was unusually large. Becky knew all about it, because Dr. Dodge was staying at their house. To-morrow her father was going with him to Northfield to hold a meeting there. Then Dr. Dodge would go on to Brattleboro and other places.

The schoolhouse was quite radiant, merely from the firelight that illuminated every inch of it, and shone in rosy squares on the snow out of every window. But the firelight, bright as it was, was too flickering and irregular to work by, so each pupil had brought a candle. They let a few drops of tallow fall on the desk, and stuck the candles in that, where they stood upright. The schoolroom was a cheerful, pleasant

place that evening, between the ruddy firelight, and the candles blazing on the desks. It was a scene of quiet, happy industry.

Such a busy lot of pupils they were, and such a scratching and dotting of slate pencils as echoed through the quiet room! If any one needed assistance he raised his hand, and Mr. Wyatt went to him, explaining the difficulty. Dan was grappling with fractions. Mr. Wyatt sat down by him, and so clearly and patiently explained all the "whys" that new light dawned on Dan's troubled path, and fractions henceforth lost much of their terror for him.

Nothing makes time fly so fast as work, work when one's heart is in it. When the nine-o' clock bell rang out, right over their heads, it seemed, they were so near the church, every one exclaimed, —

"Why, how late it is! I did n't suppose it was more than eight o' clock yet."

"I did not mean to stay quite so late myself," said Mr. Wyatt, "but time passed faster than I was aware. We will have ciphering schools often this winter, and see if we do not have some progress to show for it before the term ends."

The nine-o' clock bell being the signal for

every one to go home if abroad, or to bed if at home, the ciphering school hastily disbanded. Walking along home, Erasmus said, —

“How bright the stars are to-night!”

“They twinkle so they almost seem to dance,” said Becky, looking up at the mysterious lights overhead sparkling in the dark depths of the sky.

“Do you know the names of any of the constellations?” asked Mr. Wyatt.

“I know the North Star, and the Dipper,” said Dan. “I often wish I knew their names.”

Mr. Wyatt pointed out Orion, and the Pleiades and Hyades, and the Sickle just appearing above the eastern hills, and others of the more easily identified constellations. Then he told the children about the Milky Way, how it was composed of innumerable suns, like our own sun, each supposed to have planets revolving around it, but so far away in boundless space that the most powerful telescopes man could make brought them no nearer, left them still apparently the same dim little stars that blended in the milky track across the heavens.

As he talked a vague sense of what is meant by space, by the universe, filled the children’s minds with awe. Dan drew a long breath.

"It makes us seem very small," he said. "I should think astronomy must be an awfully interesting study."

"It is, intensely interesting," said Mr. Wyatt. "Why, Dan, old fellow, you don't believe it now, but the highest pleasure this earth has is to study and *know*. And it is a pleasure that is endless; we never can exhaust it. The more we know, the more we see we want to know ahead of us."

"I don't care about knowing so awful much," said Dan.

"I do," said Becky. "I want to know everything."

"Well said, little girl," said Mr. Wyatt, taking Becky's hand.

"Father wants to send Dan to college," said Erasmus, "but he does n't want to go because he does n't want to study Greek."

"I wish I could have Dan's chance," said Becky.

"Girls cannot go to college, of course," said Mr. Wyatt, "but they can grow up to be useful, intelligent women, and be a great help to the world. Dan, you've no idea how fascinating those old Greeks are. Why, ancient Greece is the world's real fairy land. I certainly hope

you will change your mind about going to college, for it is, I assure you, the chance of your life. It will make more difference in your future than you can conceive now. Do you never feel a desire to go to college, Erasmus?"

"No sir; I'm all business. I mean to go out West somewhere, and go into business, when I get through school, if father is willing."

"Oh, 'Rasmus," cried Becky, "shall you go in one of those big covered wagons, like the pictures in our geographies that say 'Connecticut emigrants going to Ohio'? Because I should like to go in one of those wagons with you."

"Oh, no, I guess not," said 'Rasmus. "I shall go by stage, I guess, and then by flat-boat."

So they chatted as they walked home in the clear starlight. More than one night after that, as Dan glanced up at the stars, he recalled what Mr. Wyatt had said of the pleasures of knowing. Yes, after all, Dan admitted to himself, he would like to know about a good many things. Was Mr. Wyatt right, he wondered? Would study and going to college open up a new world of wonder and never-ending delight to him?

CHAPTER XV.

WINTER SPORTS.

THE next morning, soon after breakfast, a man drove up to the door with an imperative summons for Mr. Strong to go over to New Salem and attend a funeral.

“Parson Holmes is sick in bed,” said the messenger, “and the folks felt as if they must have you, Parson Strong. Nothin’ would do but I must ride over and fetch ye.”

Mr. Strong was well used to driving over the hills for miles around, in all sorts of weather, in response to such summons as this. He expressed his regrets to Dr. Dodge that he should be unable to attend the meeting at Northfield with him, instructed Erasmus to harness the horse for the doctor’s use, and wrapping himself warmly in his big surtout and muffler, rode off towards New Salem with the messenger.

When Erasmus came into the house, after

seeing Dr. Dodge started for Northfield, he was laughing heartily.

"It's fun enough to see Dr. Dodge drive," he said. "He holds the reins up high, and he keeps slapping the horse with them, and clucking and get-apping, just like a woman. You ought to have seen old John. He looked around so sort of surprised-like, when Dr. Dodge began get-apping him. I had all I could do to keep from laughing."

"Jest like a woman!" exclaimed Lyddy Ann with just indignation. "If I could n't drive better than that Dr. Dodge, I'd give up, that's all."

"He all but hit the post, going out the gate," said Erasmus.

"Well, well," said grandma, laughing a little herself, nevertheless, "you must n't make fun of Dr. Dodge. He's a very learned, eminent man, and the kindest soul that ever lived."

"That may be," said Erasmus, "but he does n't know much about driving. But I guess he'll get over to Northfield and back without being shipwrecked, if he will only let old John alone. Old John knows every inch of the way there and back, as well as I do myself."

Dr. Dodge returned in the course of the afternoon safe and sound, a great compliment to old John's sagacity. Madam Strong saw him drive into the yard, and hastened to the back door to say, —

“I am very sorry, Dr. Dodge, but there's no one to take the horse just now. My son has not yet returned, and both the boys are at school. But you can hitch him and leave him until some one comes home.”

“Oh, no,” said the doctor, who was the politest of men, and felt that duty called on him to take care of the horse. “I will unharness him myself. I presume I shall have no difficulty in so doing.”

The more Madam Strong demurred, the more the good doctor felt it his duty to insist; so she was finally obliged to retire into the house and leave him to his own way, though not without some misgivings, which led her to watch his progress from the keeping-room window. She made this report to her son in the privacy of his study that evening.

“The doctor got along fairly well at first. He was a good while about it, and he unbuckled every buckle that would unfasten. Finally, he

succeeded in getting off everything but the collar. Then he was nonplussed. He tugged and pulled, and did his best to haul it off by main force, till I did n't know but he'd pull old John's ears off. The funniest thing was to see the expression of old John's face. He looked so disgusted, just as if he wanted to speak and tell the doctor how to do it. I was laughing so I did n't want to have Lyddy Ann see me. As soon as I could straighten my face, I went out in the kitchen and said to her, —

“‘Lyddy Ann, I guess you'd better go out and help the doctor unharness. He seems to be having some trouble.’

“She went out, and there stood the doctor, stopping to get breath for a fresh pull, all flushed and perspiring, and old John with his mane all tousled up, looking so protesting-like.

“‘This is a most singular thing,’ said the doctor, as Lyddy Ann approached. ‘The collar will not come off. You do not suppose the horse's head can have swollen, do you?’

“‘Land's sakes, no,’ said Lyddy Ann, scornfully, twisting the collar around and having it off in a jiffy. ‘You jest turn it around that way, big end up, and it comes off easy enough.’

“ ‘Dear me, I never thought of that,’ said the doctor, wiping his forehead.

“ I charged Lyddy Ann not to tell the boys,” concluded Madam Strong, “ because I don’t want to have them make fun of the doctor. He’s one of the saints of this earth, but I don’t think he’s very practical.”

Lyddy Ann was, to use her own words, “ dyin’ ” to tell the boys, but dared not disobey Madam Strong’s command, and so the boys lost what they would have considered the best of jokes.

The January thaw, as ’Rasmus had prophesied, came in due time, bringing all the skating one could ask. The thaw and rain ended in a sudden cold snap and freezing, producing the iciest, most slippery crust that ever gladdened the heart of mortal boy. Everything was coated with ice, every little twig and bush glittering in the sun, a dazzling spectacle.

As has been said, the Hackmatack Centre schoolhouse being on top of a high hill, its situation afforded the best possible chances for coasting, which the children were not slow to improve. The entry and woodshed were stacked high with sleds of every shape and hue, the

home-made kind prevailing. At noon dinners were hastily eaten, and then all rushed out on the hillside.

Erasmus and Dan each had a sled, but Becky, of course, had none, it not being considered proper or necessary that girls should have sleds. But Persis, or Pert Billings, as she was called, was equal to the emergency. She lived near the schoolhouse, and appeared early one morning dragging a short, wide board.

"Oh, Pert, what are you going to do?" cried Becky, running to meet her.

"This is for us to coast on. A board will go splendidly on this icy crust, I know. But don't say a word about it, or some of the big girls might get it. Come and help me hide it in the woodshed till noon."

Now and then, during the morning session, Becky and Pert, by way of keeping their secret, exchanged glances of great significance, which fired the souls of Sophy Briggs and Peri Drake with an almost unbearable curiosity as to what the girls could possibly be planning.

At noon the scholars thronged out on the hillside, which was now a lively scene, swarming with merry coasters. Away sped the sleds

“like lightning,” as the boys said, the fastest going down quite to the tavern.

“Hi, track! track! Clear the track!” shouted the boys, as they shot down the icy road. There was a constant row of sleds dashing swiftly down, and another of coasters hurrying up the hill for another slide. The big boys frequently took some of the older girls on their sleds, but the little girls had hitherto been obliged to trust to the uncertain chances of occasional trips with a good-natured brother.

But now Pert and Becky triumphantly dragged forth their board. The board was large enough to hold Sophy and Peri too. Away it went down the hill at a very good pace indeed, its load of little girls laughing and screaming, while the whole school applauded. The more the board was used, the more slippery it grew, till finally it almost kept up with the sleds. It was difficult to steer, even for the expert Persis, and had a trick of wobbling around now and then, when least expected, and going off the side of the road, tipping the girls off like so many feathers. But this only added to the fun and excitement.

Pert's patent was much admired, and boards

now divided the honors with sleds, many who had sleds preferring boards for the novelty. Ki Kellogg made a sensation by bringing his mother's old wooden chopping-bowl, in which he made several triumphant descents of the hill, amid the shouts and cheers of the children, until the bottom suddenly gave out. Mr. Wyatt added to his popularity by sometimes coming out and joining in the sport.

The boys also started a sliding-track down the steep side-hill behind the schoolhouse. Dan enjoyed the sliding-track immensely, and freely yielded his sled to Becky, while he gave his whole energies to it. A boy had to be sure-footed and sure-headed too, to start back, run fast, and go down the track at full speed, standing erect, and not lose his balance. If he did fall, woe unto him. A broken nose would probably be the penalty. But there was a sense of power, of mastery in it that just suited Dan, nor was the spice of danger unpleasant to him.

The crust was hard on shoe leather, however. One Friday night, Dan surprised his father by saying, "Father, my boots have both got holes in them, and the heels are coming off, too."

"I am astonished," said his father, gazing

with dismay at the dilapidated state of Dan's boots. "Your boots are almost new. I don't understand it."

Dan thought perhaps he did, but did not feel it necessary to go into explanations.

"Well, I see no other way but for you to go around to Mr. Dunnell's to-night, and let him patch your boots. Take around the last calf's-hide and let him measure you for a new pair of boots. These will give out before spring."

When a calf was killed the hide was sent to the tanner's over on the brook, and made into leather, to be used whenever any one of the family needed shoes. Mr. Dunnell was a farmer, who made shoes in the dull season of winter, and sometimes cobbled a little, even in summer, to accommodate a neighbor.

Dan did not want to go over to Mr. Dunnell's to-night, having other plans for the evening. Every other Saturday school did not keep, and this was the Friday night before the fortnightly holiday. Some of the boys were coming around to spend the evening with him and 'Rasmus, and Dan had promised to play the flute to them. But then to-morrow all the boys were going skating on Badger's Pond, which was in capital

condition now, frozen half-way to the bottom. He could not skate until his boots were mended, — that was clear. So go he must, especially as father said so.

It was a lovely moonlight night, and Dan rather enjoyed his walk on the hard, sparkling crust, across lots, to Mr. Dunnell's. He found Mr. Dunnell at his bench in his little shop back of the house, hard at work on what looked like a boy's boot. He peered through his glasses at Dan's boot, with the wise look of a doctor that has been called in to a very bad case.

"Humph," he said. "Been pretty good sliding lately, hain't it, Daniel?"

"Yes, sir, splendid," said Dan.

"I thought so. Them boots wuz made out of as good cowhide as I ever put an awl in. They ought to have lasted you till spring. Wa'al, the slidin' makes my business brisk, anyway. It's a poor wind that don't blow nobody good. I'm jest driv up with work. You'll have to leave your boots here, and call for 'em to-morrow mornin'. I've got a pair here I can lend you to go home in."

Dan was overjoyed to get off so soon, and gladly accepted a pair of boots much too big

for him, in which he strode off home as fast as if they had been the original Seven League Boots. He found Ki Kellogg, Tom Pratt, Cyrus Dole, Tertius Bigbee and his older brother, Secundus, in the keeping-room, which was given up to the boys and their friends for the evening.

Mr. Bigbee, the father of Tertius, was a man of original ideas. He had named his first son Primus, and those who had followed, successively, Secundus, Tertius, Quartus, and Quintus. In this way Mr. Bigbee saved himself the great anxiety and searching of mind some people undergo in the effort to suitably name their children. His children's names were fore-ordained before birth. Should girls now be born to him they would be called Sexta, Septimia, Octavia.

The boys were gathered around the table playing Twelve Men Morris, Fox and Geese, and Checkers on home-made boards. 'Rasmus and Dan had procured at the carpenter's smoothly planed pieces of board. On these they had marked out the games with a red-hot poker, first drawing them with a pencil. They used red and yellow corn for the men.

"Hello, here comes Dan," said Tertius, as Dan came in. "Good. Now we can hear the flute."

"Yes, come on, Dan. Give us a sample of your skill," said Ki.

"Oh, I can't play much," said Dan, modestly, though secretly he felt considerably puffed up with pride over his new accomplishment.

"Well, never mind. Let's hear you, whether it's little or much," said Tom Pratt.

After being sufficiently urged, Dan went into the study and borrowed the flute of Mr. Wyatt. He had practised considerably evenings, after lessons, under Mr. Wyatt's kind instructions, and with his flute. On these occasions, Becky always sat close to him, with Snoozer in her lap, both looking admiringly on, while Dan puffed out his cheeks until they were like to crack, and blew with all his might, extracting many remarkable sounds from the long-suffering flute. But Dan's desire to learn had finally triumphed, and now he could play several tunes, and, stimulated by the boys' admiration, he piped "Come haste to the Wedding," "Fisher's Hornpipe," and "Money Musk," so merrily, that Ki and Tom could not resist stepping out to the lively measure.

"Why, what are you talking about, Dan? That's fine," said Ki, when Dan stopped to breathe.

"Best music I ever heard," said Tom Pratt.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Dan, flushed with pleasure and exertion. "You ought to hear Mr. Wyatt play on it."

"Well, I know I'd give a good deal if I could play the flute like that," said Cyrus Dole. "But you're a natural musician. My Uncle Levi says so, and I guess he knows. He leads the choir."

"Did you ever see the fiddle that Dan made last fall?" asked Erasmus.

"No. Let's see it. Bring it out, Dan," cried the boys.

Thus urged Dan went up stairs to the drawer where he kept his treasures, and brought down the little fiddle. It was made of a shingle cut in the shape of a violin. Dan had got some broken, cast-off bass-viol strings of Enoch Benson, who played the bass-viol in the choir. These were amply long for his fiddle, and were carefully attached, running duly across a bridge, and wound around wooden pegs that served for keys. Old John could have told a tale of

suffering connected with the bow, for its hair came from his tail, and was not secured without some rebellion and kicking up on his part. A good many hours' work had Dan put into the little fiddle, whittling away evening after evening with all the fond devotion of an artist.

The boys could not admire it enough. In their eyes it was far more remarkable than a common every-day violin, such as you could buy at a store.

"Can you play a tune on it, Dan?" asked Secundus.

"Of course he can," said Ki.

Dan placed the fiddle under his chin, and drew the bow with the air of a second Paganini, extracting a rather squeaking melody from the strings, which delighted the boys.

"I tell you what, Dan," said Tom Pratt, "I'll give you fifty cents for that fiddle."

Fifty cents was a large sum to Dan, and would very perceptibly swell the flute fund. But sell his fiddle, the apple of his eye? Never.

"No, sir," he replied. "This fiddle is n't for sale."

Here Mr. Wyatt came out of the study.

"Did you make this, Dan?" he asked, examining the little violin with much interest.

"Yes, sir," said Dan.

"Never tell me," said Mr. Wyatt, looking smilingly at Dan, "that a boy who has as much perseverance and ingenuity as you cannot learn Greek."

"But Greek is n't fun, and the fiddle is," replied Dan.

"Life is n't all fun, you know," said Mr. Wyatt. "Besides, Greek is pretty good fun too, after you get into it. At least, it's very interesting."

Dan now begged Mr. Wyatt to play on the flute, and he complied, bewitching the boys with the sweet melody of the instrument in his hands, and raising Dan, as good music always did, to the seventh heaven of delight, under whose spell, as well as that of the boys' praises, he went to bed, to dream dreams and build air-castles, wherein he figured as an eminent musician of the future, if not *the* eminent musician, — who knows?

"The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Saturday afternoon, the boys, having worked

smartly all the forenoon, were allowed to go skating on Badger's Pond. As they came in sight of the pond, it was an animating spectacle. Most of the boys in town were there, and all the hills around rang again with their shouts and laughter. Ki Kellogg was there, foremost in the fun, the gayest of the gay. No fear of his going through the ice to-day. The surface of the pond was as solid as the earth itself, frozen hard half-way to the bottom. Only the spring sun could now soften it.

Some of the boys had brought their sleds. Going up the hill, they came swiftly dashing down over the hard crust, when they reached the ice gliding out over it so rapidly they hardly seemed to touch it, flying on, on, far down the pond.

It was a bitterly cold day, the mercury below zero, but little cared the jolly skaters for that; warm mittens protected their hands, and their ears were tied up in red woollen comforters, which were twisted around their necks, and flew gayly out behind as they sped on like the wind. And it's a poor boy that can't keep his own nose from freezing.

They built a great fire in the middle of the

pond, partly to warm themselves by, but chiefly because they liked to see its cheerful red blaze, and because boys like any excuse to build a bonfire. But their active exercise kept them in a warm glow.

The winter's afternoon flew as if on wings. Late in the day Ki Kellogg said to Erasmus, —

“Who's that driving on the pond down there? Why, if it is n't Tom Pratt!”

Tom was indeed driving on the pond with his father's horse and sleigh.

“Hello, Tom!” cried Erasmus. “I thought you could n't come skating to-day?”

“No more I could n't,” said Tom. “I had to drive over to Greenfield on business for father. But it's tip-top sleighing, and I put the old mare through, and here I am, in time for a little fun, as well as the rest of you.”

Tom now caused the old mare to execute a number of striking evolutions on the ice, the horse entering into the spirit of the occasion, and seeming to enjoy going on the ice, where the sleigh slipped so easily. She was sharp-shod, and her shoes cut little nicks in the ice, as she dashed up and down the pond, under Tom's skilful guidance.

The boys with sleds attached their ropes to the sleigh, and some of the skaters also took hold of it, to be drawn swiftly along without effort of their own. When going at full gallop, Tom suddenly turned his horse quickly, whirling his sleigh sharply around. It slewed on the smooth surface, throwing the boys right and left, tumbling them all over the ice. What a laugh went up, at this trick of Tom's!

But now the brief winter twilight began to darken into night, before any one imagined that the all too short Saturday afternoon was so near its end. The bonfire on the ice glowed more beautifully in the gathering darkness, lighting up the black pines on the shore, the bare limbs of the white birches, the delicate tracery of the elm-trees' twigs, sending a rosy glow along the sparkling ice, now cut and scratched with miles and miles of interlacing skate-tracks. The stars were coming out overhead, and in the western sky hung the tiny sickle of the new moon. It was hard to tear themselves away, and the only consolation was that suggested by Tom Pratt, who said, —

“I tell you what, boys, there'll be some glorious moonlight nights about the last of

next week, and if it does n't snow before then to spoil the skating — ”

“It will; it's sure to,” broke in Primus Bigbee, who was inclined to look on the dark side of life, embittered perhaps by his name.

“Why then,” continued Tom, not minding Primus's dark forebodings, “let's all come down next Friday night for a grand moonlight skate.”

“Agreed!” cried one and all.

“'Rasmus,” said Ki, “there 's the new moon. Be sure to look at it first over your right shoulder for luck.”

“The best luck I want just now,” said Erasmus, who was hurrying off his skates with all possible speed, “is to get home as quick as I can, and not get into trouble for staying out so late Saturday night.”

“Well, we can honestly say that we did n't suppose it was so late,” said Ki. “I never thought of its being more than three o'clock, when, first I knew, it began to grow dark; and I shall tell father so.”

“I never saw such a short afternoon,” said Dan, who shared his brother's apprehensions as to the fate probably awaiting them at home.

"All that are going my way, pile into my sleigh," said Tom.

With this help Dan and Erasmus made good speed to their corner, where their road branched off from the turnpike.

"It's awful hard to come down to walking again after skating," said Dan, as he and Erasmus hurried along the home road. "My feet seem to stump into the ground; I feel as if I had taken off my wings."

"That's so," said Erasmus. "I feel just so myself. I know one thing; I'm as hungry as a bear."

"A bear!" exclaimed Dan; "I'm as hungry as forty bears. There'll be pork and beans for supper, that's one good thing."

"Ah, yes," said Erasmus; "but suppose you and I don't get any of them? I should n't wonder if father sent us to bed without any supper for being out so late Saturday night."

Dan felt that this awful fate was not improbable, and the boys entered the dining-room, where the family were already seated at the tea-table, with secret misgivings, not made less by the expression of their father's face.

"My sons," said Mr. Strong, "I am equally

surprised and grieved that you should set such an example to the community as this. To be out skating not only after sundown Saturday night, but after dark! It is a scandal, and will be the cause of much comment. I did not expect such conduct from my sons, especially from you, Erasmus."

"We are very sorry, sir," said Erasmus. "We had no idea it was so late. The afternoon was so short, and it came on dark before we knew it. We hurried home as fast as we could as soon as we noticed it was growing dark. It's a long ways home from Badger's Pond."

Dan said nothing, glad that for once 'Rasmus was in like condemnation with himself, and leaving him to make their defence unaided. Did anything ever smell more aggravatingly delicious than those baked beans steaming up under their hungry noses?

Here the boys received reinforcements from an unexpected quarter. Grandma came to their rescue.

"You must n't be too hard on the boys this time, Erasmus," she said. "I know just how it is myself. The afternoons are a mere noth-

ing now. I cannot get anything done, hardly. It gets dark right after dinner, seems to me. I don't believe the boys meant to stay out so late."

"No sir, we did n't," said 'Rasmus, "and we are very sorry."

"I will overlook your offence, then, this time," said Mr. Strong, "but this is something that must never occur again. Always remember that much is expected of a minister's sons. They should be an example to the community. Their short comings will be more severely criticised than those of others, and rightly so."

At last the boys were let loose on the pork and beans, and wrought such fearful havoc upon them that Lyddy Ann, when she came to clear the table, said, as she took up the lightened dish, —

"Well, I do declare, I never see the beat of them boys for eatin'! They come down on the supper-table like them swarms of locusts that Moses sent to plague the Egyptians. They pretty nigh make a clean sweep. I don't believe here's beans enough left for breakfast."

"You 'd better cook a little ham, then," said grandma. "Growing boys are always hungry."

Becky had also held her own fairly well at the supper-table. She had done her "stent" of sewing so nicely, not stopping to read once; actually turning a whole sheet in the forenoon, with such neat over-and-over stitches as to win from grandma the rare compliment, —

"I could n't have done it better than that myself, Becky. I must show that to your Grandma Bullard the next time she comes down."

So, as a reward, grandma had let her spend the whole afternoon over at Peri Drake's; and the little girls had played out-doors all the afternoon in the crisp, cold air, running and sliding, and came in at night fresh and blooming, and almost as hungry as their brothers.

When the boys went to bed that night Dan said: "'Rasmus, I wish I was n't a minister's son. It's really terrible to have to be setting an example all the time."

"I don't think you are wearing yourself out that way," said 'Rasmus, sleepily. Nothing makes a boy more sleepy than an afternoon's skating, and even Dan soon forgot his sorrows in setting an example to the community, in a sweet, deep sleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GREAT EVENT.

THE great events of life usually steal upon us unannounced. We go on, living our humdrum, every-day lives, expecting nothing else, when, "presto, change!" — something we never dreamed of occurs. So it was with Dan. He looked forward to a winter of steady school-going as usual, varied by as much skating, coasting, and snowballing as he could crowd into the chinks of time left between school and "chores." Only this, and nothing more did he expect.

But one Monday morning Mr. Haskins, the drover, called to see Mr. Strong on his return trip from Boston. Dan thought nothing of that. But after Mr. Haskins had gone his father called Dan into the study.

"My son," said Mr. Strong, looking, as Dan noticed, somewhat excited, "sit down; I wish to talk with you."

Dan sat down, racking his brain to think what he had been doing now.

"Mr. Haskins has called here," said Mr. Strong, "to make me an extraordinary proposition, but one extremely kind, I must say. He is going down to Boston again next week with a load of produce, and he offers to take you with him."

Dan jumped from his chair, his face flushed, his eyes flashing with excitement.

"Oh, father!" he burst out.

"Sit still, and keep perfectly calm, Daniel," said Mr. Strong, who was considerably excited himself. "This is too important a matter to be lightly or hastily decided."

Dan felt that this was true, and subsided—outwardly.

"It seems," continued his father, "that Mr. Haskins was much pleased with the care you took of his drove of cattle last fall. He said some highly complimentary things of you, which I will not repeat. I trust, however, that you will always strive to deserve the good opinion of your elders."

"Yes, sir," said Dan, in a fever of impatience.

"He very kindly said he should like to give

you a chance to see Boston, and he thought you might also be some help to him on the way."

"Oh, father, will you let me go? May I go?" asked Dan.

"There are many things to be considered. You would lose several days' schooling."

"Oh, but, father, I will study extra, before I go and after I come back, and make it all up."

"Then it will cost me something."

Dan's eager face fell at this. He knew how careful they had to be about spending money, and felt that here was likely to arise the fatal objection to his going. But his father continued, —

"I feel, however, that this is such a great opportunity for you, one that will probably never occur again, that I am disposed to incur the necessary expense, which, however, you must keep as light as possible. You will stop at your Uncle Jedediah's in Cambridge, and so save the expense of a public house. I need some new books, which I can find only in Boston, and you can buy them for me. In short, I have decided to let you go, provided Mr. Wyatt thinks you can make up your studies."

Dan thanked his father, and then darted from the room in a whirlwind of excitement, which he soon communicated to the rest of the family, when he burst into the keeping-room, shouting,

“I’m going to Boston! Hooray, Becky, grandma! I’m going to Boston!”

“Is the boy crazy?” asked grandma, looking over her glasses in surprise at Dan.

“What do you mean, Dan?” asked Becky.

“I mean just what I say,” said Dan. “I’m going to Boston next week with Mr. Haskins. Father said I might if Mr. Wyatt was willing, and I must go this minute and see what he says.”

And Dan rushed out of the room, leaving grandma “all in a whirl,” as she said, by the flood of new plans thus suddenly opened up to her mind.

“I must get ’Rasmus to ride right over to-night and see if he can get Miss Patty to come here a few days, and make Dan a surtout of some sort. He can’t take that long journey without one. Besides, I want him to make a decent figure at his Uncle Jedediah’s. This will be a grand chance for me to send down to Boston for a new bombazine dress. And I should n’t

wonder if Dan could get Priscilla's new leghorn bonnet."

"I wish I were a boy too, so I could go to Boston," said Becky, mournfully. She was full of excitement, talking over with Dan all the great things he was likely to see and do on this trip to Boston, — the metropolis, not only of New England, but of the world, in the children's opinion.

Mr. Wyatt was heartily in favor of Dan's going. He said to Mr. Strong, —

"I don't know of anything likely to be of more benefit to a boy of Dan's temperament than just such a trip as this. He will pick up many new ideas, and get his ambition roused. By all means let him go."

The way in which Dan now studied was a marvel. No recesses for him now; he spent them all in study, and at night actually had to be driven off from his books to bed.

"The age of miracles has come again, I do believe," said grandma. "It's lucky the boy's going to Boston so soon, or I really think he would bring on a brain fever, studying so."

The boys at school would ordinarily have resented this extraordinary studiousness on Dan's

part, and called him a "goody;" but now they gazed on him with mingled respect and envy. None of them had ever been to Boston; indeed, a journey there was a rare event in the lives of their fathers, always excepting Captain Pratt, and Mr. Strong, who occasionally went down to the May anniversaries, driving himself, and arranging exchanges on the way, for convenient stopping-places.

Dan tried not to put on airs, if he were going to Boston, but it was a little hard not to feel rather smart and superior, especially when every one was consulting him, and giving him the most important commissions. Besides all his grandmother's errands, Miss Patty and Lyddy Ann both sent for dress goods, and Miss Patty charged him to keep his eyes open and notice all the latest fashions, as she should be in to see him and hear all about it, as soon as he returned. His father gave him a list of theological books, which Dan was to get at the Corner Book-store.

"And I need a new black satin stock, which you may purchase in Boston," said Mr. Strong.

Dan confided to his grandmother his fears

that he should not have any time for sight-seeing, with so much shopping to attend to.

"You must remember that we don't often have such a chance as this to send right to Boston for things," said his grandmother. "And you must be willing to accommodate your friends when you are going to have such a good time yourself."

"I am," said Dan. "But I really think Mr. Haskins will need an extra sleigh to hold all I have to buy."

"I do wish Dan could get me a new doll," said Becky. "I never had one in my life, except that old one of mother's. Peri Drake has the most be-*you*-tiful doll you ever saw, that her aunt in Boston sent her, and I wish I could have one just like it."

Becky's doll was an heirloom. It was of painted wood, considerably battered with the lapse of time. It was supposed to have been brought from England by one of the early ancestresses of the Bullards, and had been kept in the family ever since. And, although the aged Sophronia had a beautiful green silk calash, made out of a piece of grandma's own, and a brocade silk dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves and

a wide embroidered collar, and although Becky loved her tenderly, there was still a longing in her heart for something prettier.

"'Sh, Becky," said grandma. "Little girls must learn to be contented with what they have. We have n't any money to waste on dolls. Most little girls would be very thankful to have such a nice doll as Sophronia."

"I know it," said Becky mournfully, convinced, but "of the same opinion still."

Out at the barn one night 'Rasmus said to Dan, confidentially: "I wish, Dan, you would ask Uncle Jedediah, as soon as you get to Boston, if he won't keep a look-out for a place in a store down there for me next fall. I shall cipher clear through the arithmetic this winter, and I mean to try to have father let me begin to clerk it next fall. I shall be fifteen next March, and I think I shall be plenty old enough to go into business then."

This filled the measure of Dan's importance.

"Well, I'll see what I can do for you, 'Rasmus," he said, in a patronizing tone.

The following Saturday was a busy day at the minister's. The butcher came and killed the fat hog, that it might be sent to Boston for sale

by Mr. Haskins. The killing of the 'pig was always a time of trial to Becky. She took Snoozer, whom she felt to be the only person fully entering into her feelings, and buried herself in grandma's closet, stopping her ears with her fingers, lest she should hear the pig's last dying squeals.

Dan, who considered the butchering an exciting and agreeable occasion, hunted everywhere for her, to tease her by pulling her fingers out of her ears and making her listen, but grandma would not let him into her room. After all was over, a sort of horrible fascination drew Becky out to look at the dead hog, hanging by his heels from a hook under the cornhouse shed, stiff and frozen over the blood-stained snow, a ghastly spectacle.

Dan, who had charge of the hens, was allowed to kill a dozen to take to Boston and sell, as a private speculation of his own. Becky had to help pick and pin-feather the fowls.

"How I do hate and despise this work," she grumbled.

"Never you mind, sis," said Dan, in high good humor. "I'll bring you a nice present from Boston to pay for it, you see if I don't."



“There,” said Miss Patty, “that’s a surtout as *is* a surtout.”
PAGE 259.

"It ought to be *very* nice indeed, to pay me for doing this," said Becky, regarding with great distaste the moist hen in her hand, steaming with the hot water just poured over it to loosen the feathers.

"It will be," said Dan.

Miss Patty, as she said, "jest laid herself out," on Dan's surtout. It was of brown camlet, made from an old one of his father's. Of course she made it amply large to cover Dan's growth for some years to come. The long skirts came nearly to his heels, the high, rolling velvet collar almost, if not quite, touched his cap behind, and the cuffs covered his hands. It had also a large cape.

"There," said Miss Patty, with great satisfaction, giving the garment a twitch here and there, at the final trying-on, "that's a surtout as *is* a surtout. I ain't afraid to have you wear that to Boston. You can hold up your head with the best of 'em, Daniel. None of the Boston dandies will have anything to beat that, I can tell you. It's a new pattern, the latest touch. Miss Hathaway's husband's sister, whose son is a tailor in Boston, sent it up for 'Zekiel this fall."

“Handsome is that handsome does,” said grandma, fearing Dan might be proud.

Dan did, indeed, feel much pleased with the new garment. Few boys in Hackmatack had anything of the sort. Dan dedicated the wonderful garment next Sunday. It happened that the Rev. Nehemiah Cutter had exchanged with his father this Sunday. Mr. Cutter had a piercing black eye, a severe manner, and read the Scriptures in a denunciatory tone, that made his hearers feel personally responsible for all the sins of Israel. His selection to-day was from Ecclesiastes. As he rolled out, “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity,” he fixed his eye severely on Dan.

Dan blushed scarlet, feeling that the whole congregation must know that Mr. Cutter referred to the new surtout. But that afternoon, when Dan brought Mr. Cutter’s horse and sleigh up to the door as he was departing, he actually handed Dan a ninepence, saying pleasantly, “I hear you have a trip in prospect, Daniel, so here is a little spending money for you. I hope you will have a pleasant trip.”

Dan was so astonished he hardly recovered enough to thank Mr. Cutter properly before he

drove off. Now and then, but very rarely, the visiting ministers rewarded his and 'Rasmus's services as hostlers with a few pennies. More usually these services were accepted as a matter of course. But a whole ninepence! And from Mr. Cutter, of all men!

When he hastened into the house, and told of this remarkable occurrence, Madam Strong said, —

“Live and learn, Daniel. When you get to be as old as I am you'll learn not to judge folks by the outside. Mr. Cutter's bark is a great deal worse than his bite. They say his parish sets the world by him. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’”

CHAPTER XVII.

DAN'S TRIP.

MONDAY, although Dan had already ciphered far ahead of his class, he made a desperate effort to keep his mind on his studies. True, he could not resist now and then turning the geography pages to the map of Massachusetts, and gloating over that part of its red surface covering the way between Hackmatack and that big black dot on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean labelled BOSTON. Was it possible that this very week he should travel all that distance, that the black dot would become a real place to him, as real as Hackmatack, — that he should actually see the ocean?

When school closed at night the boys all shouted, as Dan hurried off for home, "Good-by, Dan. Hope you'll have a nice time in Boston;" which sounded most agreeably to Dan, giving him already a feeling of travel.

Near the tavern whom should he meet but Mr. Haskins driving up.

"Hallo, young man," said Mr. Haskins cheerily, "are you going to Boston with me to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir," said Dan, a broad smile beaming all over his face.

"Well, that's right. You'll have to be up early, though. I start at four o'clock."

"I'll be on hand," said Dan, who was sure that he should not sleep a wink that night.

"I'll be round to see your father pretty soon," said Mr. Haskins, "but first I must put my team up at the tavern."

"Can't I take your team round to the barn for you?" asked Dan.

"Well, I guess you can," said Mr. Haskins, who was cold and glad to get in by the bright fire whose blaze reddened the bar-room windows.

Mr. Haskins' team was a span of strong bay horses and a great box sleigh, the latter piled high with produce for the Boston market, and covered with a canvas cloth. As Dan sat proudly up on the high seat, and guided the willing horses under the horse-shed, who should

come along and see him but Cyrus Dole and Tertius Bigbee on their way home from school.

"This is the team I'm going to Boston with to-morrow," said Dan, giving the off horse a quite unnecessary flick with Mr. Haskins' long whip.

"Is it?" said the boys admiringly, running to hang on behind. "My! I'd give something for your chance, Dan. You're a lucky dog."

"I know it," said Dan.

Tuesday morning, while it was still dark as night out-doors, lights were flitting about the minister's house, gleaming now out this window, now out that. The whole family, even Becky, were up, to see Dan off. Dan was too much excited to eat any breakfast to speak of, but his grandmother said, —

"I don't feel a mite worried about Dan because he can't eat. He'll be hungry enough as soon as he is fairly off."

She and Lyddy Ann put up a great basket of luncheon to be used on the way, to save tavern expense.

Hardly was this done when Mr. Haskins drove into the yard, to add Mr. Strong's pork and

fowls to his already large load of like produce, all frozen stiff and solid, so it could be safely transported any distance. Not much was visible of Dan — in the folds of the new surtout, with a red comforter wrapped round and round his neck, and his cap-lappets tied well down over his ears, — except a broad smile of delight, his sparkling eyes, and the tip of his nose as he mounted the seat beside Mr. Haskins, and tucked the buffalo robe in tight around him. It gave Becky a sense of travel simply to look at the big sleigh and span of horses that in only two days would be in Boston; and she envied Dan, and wondered if she should ever go there too.

“Do be careful, Daniel, and not get into any trouble, or let anything happen to you. Cities are terribly dangerous places,” said grandma, who felt like the hen who sees her duckling embarking on a large pond, as she saw her boy about going out from her into the great, wicked world, full of snares for young feet.

“I’ll take first-rate care of Daniel, Madam Strong. Don’t you worry a mite about him. I’ll bring him back all right,” said Mr Haskins, gathering up his reins.

“Be a good boy, my son,” said Mr. Strong.

"Remember what I told you, Dan," said 'Rasmus.

"Don't forget my present," cried Becky.

"Well, I wish you all good-morning," said Mr. Haskins, letting go the stamping horses, fresh from their stable, and impatient with the cold. Amid a loud chorus of "good-bys" they dashed out of the yard, and the lively jingle of the sleigh-bells soon died away in the distance.

It was a stinging cold morning, and Dan was glad to protect his nose with his mittened hand. Mr. Haskins' whiskers were white with frost, and the horses' white breath froze on their sides. But was Dan sorry he had come, while the sleigh squeaked along in the cold, gray dawn, and Mr. Haskins drove on in silence, not disposed for conversation so early in the morning? Not a bit of it. It was the best kind of fun to dash along and see the rest of the world gradually waking up and coming to life again, and to feel so bright, and wide-awake, and ahead of everybody, and to be really going to Boston at last.

The gray east reddened, and then the sun came up, bright and clear, but seeming to shine

with but a frosty warmth. It glittered on snow-covered fields and hills new to Dan. Every one they met knew Mr. Haskins, and exchanged a friendly "How d'ye do?" with him.

As nine o'clock drew near they passed or met groups of school children, who drew up beside the road and made their manners to Mr. Haskins, and gazed with curiosity and envy on Dan, especially if, as happened now and then, he were driving, while Mr. Haskins slapped his hands across his chest to warm them. Dan felt like shouting out to the boys, —

"I'm going to Boston!"

And when they passed a schoolhouse, and heard the monotonous voices within drawling out, "B-a-k-e-r, Baker," in a sing-song tone, and saw a boy's face peeping furtively out the window at the handsome pair of horses and big sleigh dashing past, Dan felt a most delightful sense of freedom and happiness. He privately decided that he would be a drover like Mr. Haskins when he grew up, and spend his time travelling the road to Boston.

The sleighing was capital, and the bay span such fast travellers that they reached the Gardiner tavern by high noon.

"We'll put the horses up here, and take dinner," said Mr. Haskins.

"I'm glad of that," said Dan, "for I'm almost starved."

His feet were so cold, and his legs so stiff and benumbed from long sitting that he climbed down like an old man, and was glad enough to thaw himself before the big fireplace in the bar-room. He and Mr. Haskins dined (as was often the frugal custom of travellers in those times) from the cold roast pork, bread and butter, mince pie, cheese, and pickles of Dan's lunch basket. Mr. Haskins ordered a big mug of cider for Dan, and a still bigger mug of hot flip for himself (for Mr. Haskins was wont to say, "I don't take any stock in these new fangled Washingtonian notions myself"), and the payment for these drinks and the horses' feed was considered ample compensation for the privilege of enjoying the bar-room fire. Indeed, Mr. Haskins was always welcome, as he was a sort of gazette, gathering all the news afloat along his route, and dispensing it at his next stopping-point.

After dinner they went on, following the stage-road to Boston. As they were driving over

the heights of Westminster Mr. Haskins said: "Now we're on the divide. All the streams west of here flow into the Connecticut; all east, into the Merrimac."

This gave Dan a better idea of a water-shed than a good deal of studying would have done. There's nothing like seeing your geography on the spot. He gazed with great interest on the new and beautiful country around him, especially on Mt. Wachuset, which he had often seen in the far distance, now looming up close at hand.

They reached Lancaster late in the afternoon. Mr. Haskins said, "I generally spend the night here. The horses have gone about far enough for one day, with their heavy load, and there's a first-rate tavern here."

Dan helped Mr. Haskins about the horses, and then went out to look about the town a little. Lancaster struck him as one of the pleasantest places he had ever seen, almost as pleasant as Hackmatack even, which was much for Dan to admit. When he came back to the tavern Mr. Haskins said: "Did you see the place where the old Rowlandson house stood?"

"No-o," said Dan, doubtfully. "What was the Rowlandson house, — a tavern?"

“Bless you, no,” said Mr. Haskins. “Why, Mr. Rowlandson was the minister here way back in the time of King Philip’s War, in 1675, and his house was burnt in that war. Uncle Eben here can tell you all about it. He was in that war himself, I reckon,” said Mr. Haskins, jokingly, turning to an old man who sat smoking a pipe in the chimney-corner.

“No, I warn’t in it myself,” said old Uncle Eben, slowly, taking the pipe out of his mouth, and preparing to tell a story that he had evidently often told before. “But I’ve heerd tell all about them times, over and over agin, from them that was. My grandfather was a leetle feller when it all happened, but he remembered all about it. There warn’t more ’n fifty families livin’ in town at that time. King Philip,—he was king of the Narragansett Indians, you know, and as blood-thirsty as a tiger,—wall, King Philip he got a great force together of the Narragansetts, and Wampanoags, and the Nipmucks, and the Nashaways,—fifteen hundred Indians in all, and surprised the settlement early in the mornin’. After they’d killed a good many folks, and burned several houses they all attacked Mr. Rowlandson’s house, which stood on

high ground, over towards the buryin'-ground. About forty folks and some soldiers had taken refuge in that house, and they made a most desprit fight for two hours. Grandfather's folks had fled to this house for protection, like a good many others. Grandfather used to say that, young as he was at the time, he never could forgit the horrors of that awful scene to his dyin' day; the great swarm of blood-thirsty savages a whoopin' and yellin' all round the house, and the guns a-bangin', and the shots a-flyin', and the men inside with grim, set faces, makin' mighty few words, a loadin' and firin' as fast as they could out of the winders, and his mother holdin' him tight in her arms, crouched in one corner, prayin' to God for help, and the awful feelin' that any minit they might fall into the clutches of them whoopin' demons. The Indians tried two or three times to set the house a-fire, but our folks inside kept up such a steady fire from the winders that they could n't get nigh enough to the house. But by and by grandfather said he heerd his father say, —

“ ‘ Good God! — what are the devils up to now? ’

“ They found out soon enough. The Indians

had got a cart loaded with hay, set it a-fire, and backed it up against the house, which was all ablaze in a minit. Of course the folks inside had to come out now. The Indians killed most on 'em as fast as they come out, except a few they saved to torture. Grandfather's father was killed, and he and his mother wuz carried off captives, and lived among the Indians three months.

“Mr. Rowlandson was in Boston when the town was attacked. He come home, to find the town a mass of ruins, his house burned, and seventeen of his family and relatives killed or carried off captives. He bestirred himself to get his friends and parishioners ransomed. When grandfather and his mother were finally ransomed, she was afeerd to come back to Lancaster to live, so they went down to Wethersfield, in Connecticut, and stayed with her folks three year. Then they come back here to the old farm where I'm a-livin' now. But the Indian troubles about here warn't nigh over. They went on for the next thirty year, and every little while folks wuz killed or taken captive, and houses burned. I tell you, folks that live so easy and quiet now-a-days, on the fruits of their

forefathers' sufferin's, hain't much idee what it cost.

"The first saw-mill ever built in Canada wuz built by a captive from Lancaster, Mr. Thomas Sawyer, who wuz carried up there by the Indians with his two sons, in 1705. He saved his life by doin' it. He had offered to do it, and the French governor wuz desprit anxious to have him build the mill, but the Indians wuz determined to torture and kill him, because he wuz such a brave fighter, and had killed so many Indians before they could take him. The French had to manage the Indians pretty carefully. They dassent cross 'em openly. The Indians went ahead, and tied Sawyer to the stake, and piled wood up high about him, — a man must do a heap of thinkin' in a short time in such a fix as that, — and they wuz just a-goin' to touch it off, and burn him alive, and they wuz all a-standin' around, ready to dance and holler while he wuz a-burnin', when, all of a sudden, one of them Catholic priests they have up there in Canada appeared among 'em, a holdin' out some keys, and he spoke in an awful voice and told 'em those wuz the keys of purgatory, and he'd send 'em all there that

minit if they did n't let their prisoner go. They believed every word the priest told 'em, so they unbound Sawyer and give him up to the governor, and Sawyer built the saw-mill. His son, Elias, stayed there three year, and showed the Frenchmen how to run it. Those were cruel, hard times, and it took lots of pluck to live then."

Here the supper-bell rang. Dan, who had listened eagerly to Uncle Eben, and who was full of questions he wanted to ask, said, "Won't you please tell some more Indian stories, sir?"

"Not to-night, my son," said the old gentleman. "I could tell you lots of 'em, true ones, too, that happened right round here. But I must be a-gittin' along home. My women-folks seem to think I can't be trusted out after dark, and they'll be a-worryin' about me, if I ain't a-goin'."

And so, calling for his horse and cutter, Uncle Eben departed.

When Dan went to bed that night, although the excitement of sleeping in a tavern for the first time in his life could not keep him awake after his early rising and long drive in the cold, yet he dreamed many troubled dreams of fights with the Indians, in which he did not always

come off conqueror. Mr. Haskins found it hard work to waken him in the gray light of the next morning, and make him comprehend where he was.

But once roused, Dan was wide-awake. To-day he should be in Boston!

The drive that day was full of interest to him. Like most American boys, of his time at least, he knew all about the historic events of the Revolutionary War that had occurred in Concord and Lexington, and was immensely interested to see with his own eyes the very spots where the fighting had taken place. Mr. Haskins stopped long enough to let him read the inscriptions on the new monument just erected on the Concord battle-ground, and on the monument on Lexington Common. Dan's soul burned with patriotic fire as he read: "Sword of British Tyranny and Oppression," "Blood of these Martyrs," "They nobly dared to be Free!" and the rest.

"I tell you what, Mr. Haskins," said he, as he climbed back into the sleigh again, "I just wish there 'd be another war with the British. I 'd go and fight 'em, you 'd better believe!"

"Great Britain ain't a goin' to stir us up

much, so long's Andy Jackson's at the helm," said Mr. Haskins. "She knows too well what she'd get if she did. Yes sir, she'd better let us alone."

"I should say so," said Dan warmly, on general principles, though, as became the true son of a true Whig, he did not at all indorse the Jackson worship.

In the afternoon they drove into Cambridge, past the house that had been Washington's headquarters, so Mr. Haskins told Dan, and up to a square white house with green blinds, standing behind large elms on Brattle Street. This was the home of Dan's Uncle Jedediah, who had resigned his pastorate, and was now keeping a select school for boys, also fitting a few young men for Harvard.

"You must be sure and be on time Friday morning, Daniel," said Mr. Haskins. "We must start bright and early to get home before sundown Saturday night."

"Yes, sir, I'll be on hand, you may depend," said Dan, looking rather sober. Bidding Dan good-by, Mr. Haskins drove on into Boston, where he went to Wilde's Hotel, his regular stopping-place.

Dan began to feel homesick as he watched the sleigh and Mr. Haskins, his last links to home, disappearing up the street, leaving him alone, a stranger in a strange land, standing on the door-steps, dreading to meet his unknown relations. Even the new surtout failed to give him all the moral courage he could have wished. Something must be done, however. He therefore plied the brass knocker rather timidly. The door was opened by a pretty little girl, of about Becky's age, who asked him into the library. Dan followed her, his heart sinking within him, devoutly wishing he was at home.

But as he entered the room he was met by a tall, black-eyed gentleman, looking so much like Uncle Zach and Grandma Bullard that Dan at once felt less bashful.

"What! Is it possible that this is Remember's boy?" said Uncle Jedediah, when Dan had made himself known. "I'm glad to see you. Otis, Esther, this is your cousin Daniel Strong, come all the way from old Hackmatack to make us a visit."

And so Dan met his cousins, — Esther, the girl who had opened the door, and Otis, a boy of about the age of 'Rasmus. Here his aunt

entered the room, having just come home. She wore a rustling green silk dress, with a very full skirt and huge sleeves, and a great embroidered lace collar coming to her shoulders, and her hair was all in little curls each side her face, caught back with side combs, while a band of velvet encircled her forehead. She seemed to Dan a most elegant lady, and all his shyness returned in full force; but soon vanished before her cordial greeting.

When Dan told his friends how he had come, and that he had only one day to stay, his uncle, whose heart warmed towards the boy fresh from his own old home in Hackmatack hills, said, —

“Well, that’s a great pity, but it is better than nothing. Otis, I will excuse you from your lessons to-morrow, and you may devote the day to taking your cousin around. See how much of Boston you can show him in a day.”

“I shall be delighted, sir,” said Otis, who felt fully resigned to this change of duties.

When, in the course of the evening, Dan began to inquire about the stores, and mentioned his various commissions, his Aunt Susan at once greatly relieved his mind by saying, —

"I am going into Boston to-morrow, Daniel, and I will do your shopping for you, if you can trust me."

"I can trust you a great deal better that I can myself," said Dan. "I don't know anything about dresses and bonnets."

"Your aunt does," said Uncle Jedediah, "and she had rather go shopping any day than eat her dinner. So you can give the whole day to sight-seeing with a clear conscience."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIGHT-SEEING IN BOSTON.

AUNT Susan had an earlier breakfast than usual, to give Dan as long a day as possible.

“I will take you over to see Harvard College myself,” said Uncle Jedediah. “Then I will pass you over to Otis’s care for the day.”

On the way Mr. Bullard stopped to show Dan the Washington Elm.

“This tree probably belonged to the original forest,” he said. “So it has witnessed the whole history of our country. Washington drew his sword for the first time as commander-in-chief of the American forces under this very elm, which fact gives it its name.”

Dan gazed up with a certain awe at the sweeping branches of the grand old tree, and pleased himself by fancying his great-uncle Noah standing in line there with the rest of the

soldiers as grandma had pictured him, — tall, slender, young, full of enthusiasm, as he swelled the shout of welcome to the new general.

Dan was greatly impressed with the college buildings. He had heard of Harvard all his life; now he was seeing it.

“Which is Hollis Hall?” he asked.

“Here, at our right,” said Uncle Jedediah.

“That is where father roomed,” said Dan.

“I hope you will room there too, sometime,” said his uncle.

“Well, perhaps,” said Dan, his resolve not to go to college weakening as he saw more of the attractions of “fair Harvard.”

His uncle took him into some of the rooms, and into the library, which he told Dan contained forty thousand volumes. Dan thought this would be something to astonish Becky when he went home. The young gentlemen whom Dan encountered about the college campus seemed to him very fine young gentlemen indeed. It certainly would be a nice thing to be a college student, and have all the pleasures and advantages that Harvard offered.

As they were leaving the campus they passed a gambrel-roofed house, where Mr. Bullard said

the college president lived. At that moment the door opened, and a stately gentleman issued forth, to whom Dan noticed that his uncle raised his hat with much deference.

“That is President Quincy,” said Mr. Bullard, in a low tone.

Dan felt that this would be something to tell his father, that he had seen the celebrated Josiah Quincy, of whom he had so often heard his father speak with high respect.

Dan was now passed over to the charge of his cousin Otis. As the two boys started off for Boston, in fine spirits, Dan said,—

“I hope, Otis, you will come up and visit us sometime, and let me pay you back for all you are doing for me.”

“Oh, that’s nothing at all,” said Otis. “I’d rather do it than not. But I want to go up to Hackmatack next summer, if I can. Father’s always told us so many stories about what he did there when he was a boy that I feel as if I knew all about it.”

“We boys have lots of fun there,” said Dan.

“I’ll warrant you do, — a good deal more than we do here,” said Otis.

By this time they were walking across the

long toll-bridge between Cambridge and Boston. Dan was delighted to see schooners, boats, and various sailing craft moored along shore, or plying about.

“What smells so queer?” he asked.

“I guess you notice the salt smell,” said Otis.

“The tide is coming in now.”

“What! Is this really salt water?” asked Dan, gazing with great interest over into the green water lapping against the piles of the bridge.

“Of course it is,” said Otis, laughing. “But don’t waste any of your enthusiasm here. Wait till we are on top the State House.”

Otis led the way first to the State House, across the common, whose snow-covered hills, Dan noticed, were well worn with coasting tracks, showing that Boston boys did not differ much in tastes from Hackmatack boys, if they did live in a great city.

He looked with respect on the elegant residences of Beacon Hill, among which his cousin pointed out John Hancock’s house. From the common they had a fine view of Charles River, and the hills beyond.

“Down there, just below the common, on the city lands by Charles River, they say there’s

going to be a great Botanic Garden started next year," said Otis.

It was a great thing to Dan to walk up the imposing steps of the State House (whose picture was so familiar to him in his geography), and actually enter the halls of legislation, where all the laws of Massachusetts were made. He thought he could see why Squire Drake enjoyed coming to the legislature.

"Perhaps," thought Dan, "if I go to college, one of these days they might send me to the legislature. I should like to be staying in Boston all winter, when I was grown up, and did n't care so much about coasting and skating."

The boys climbed to the top of the State House dome. From this vantage point Dan saw, not only the whole city spread out below, and the harbor and islands, but stretching away to the east, like a vast, boundless blue plain, the Atlantic Ocean.

"Is n't this grand?" cried Dan. "Only to think that this is the ocean, and it's one grand sweep right across to Europe!"

"Indeed it is grand," said Otis; "but we must n't spend much time here if we want to do all I have planned for you."

"I should n't suppose there were so many houses in the whole world," said Dan, as he reluctantly turned his back on the scene below him, and followed Otis down to earth again.

"Now I am going to show you something that will make you open your eyes, I guess," said Otis.

"What is it?" asked Dan.

"Wait and see," was all the answer he could get out of Otis.

He struck diagonally across the common, crossed Boylston Street, and took Dan into a large building, where many people were coming and going. Walking through it to the rear, they came out into a great shed-like place.

As Dan stood looking about him, wondering why Otis had brought him here, he suddenly saw bearing right down on him and Otis, it seemed to him, a huge black machine, coming with immense force and swiftness, snorting, screeching, puffing out great clouds of steam and smoke. Dan clutched Otis, as the monster dashed close past them, making the earth tremble, and then stopped, puffing and blowing, as if "swelling up" for a fresh onslaught.

"It's a train of steam-cars," said Otis, laugh-

ing. "I don't wonder you were frightened. I felt just so myself the first time I saw an engine. This is the depot of the Boston and Providence railroad. The road is one of the longest in the country, — forty-one miles."

Then Otis explained how the trains ran on the iron rails, and took Dan into one of the empty coaches, very much like the stage-coaches, with three seats inside running across each, and a seat for some of the passengers on top. Dan enjoyed it all immensely, and felt that now he could astonish the boys at home, when he told them that he had seen a train of steam-cars, and been inside one.

From the Providence depot, they struck across into Washington Street. It amazed Dan to see Otis plunge fearlessly into the crowded streets, right under the noses of half a dozen horses, and dash ahead as coolly as if he were crossing a Hackmatack road, without a living thing in sight on it. Dan did not like to show the white feather, so he took his life in his hand, as he felt, and followed close at Otis's heels; but his heart beat fast, and he felt better every time they emerged from the seething whirlpool of horses and vehicles, and landed alive and whole on the sidewalk again.

After taking a hasty look at the Old South Church, and King's Chapel, Otis said, —

“ Now we will go down to the city post-office. It's in the old State House, — a famous old historic building, you know.”

“ Oh, yes, I know all about it,” said Dan.

Here the boys' attention was attracted by the sound of music. In the distance they saw a great crowd coming down Washington Street.

“ It's a parade of some sort,” said Otis. “ I declare, it's the Boston Lancers! And they've either Kendall's Brass Band, or the Boston Brigade Band. Oh, no, I see. It's a mounted band. I'm so glad you will have a chance to see the Lancers, and hear that fine band.”

“ So am I,” said Dan, overjoyed at his good fortune. He had never heard such soul-stirring martial music before, and it carried him quite away. Unconsciously he fell in with the crowd of men and boys that were following the Lancers, and marched on, keeping step to the music, his eyes fixed on the soldiers, and his heart beating high within him.

“ What magnificent looking soldiers! And what grand music!” said Dan, full of enthusiasm, turning to speak to Otis. But lo, no Otis was

there! The boys had become separated in the crowd.

Dan was dismayed. He struggled back through the crowd, looking everywhere for his cousin, but not a sign of him could he see. Dan stood helplessly on the sidewalk. He could not get back to Cambridge alone. Otis was probably looking for him, as he for Otis, but in this great maze of streets they might hunt all day, and yet be farther and farther apart. What should he do?

If he could only see one familiar face! But the crowd swept on by him, jostling him this way and that, and nobody cared for Dan.

"Get out of the way, can't you?" said a man, who was carrying goods from a dray into a store, roughly pushing Dan one side. "Stand off, and don't be blocking up the pavement."

Dan stepped quickly off the sidewalk to get out of the man's way. "Hi there! What're ye about? Want to git run over, you fool?"

Dan looked up, to see a horse's head directly over him, its driver drawing it back on its haunches to keep it from trampling him down.

Dan sprang back on the sidewalk, and began to ramble aimlessly on, tears filling his eyes.

For the first time in his life he knew the awful desolation of being alone in a crowd.

“ Hello, bub, what’s the matter? ”

Dan felt a hand on his shoulder, and looking up, saw a red-faced but kindly looking policeman.

“ I ’m lost, ” said Dan, brightening at the prospect of help.

“ I thought so, ” said the policeman. “ Knew you were a country boy the minute I laid eyes on you. ”

Dan wondered at this, especially in view of his new surtout, but told his story to the policeman.

“ Most likely your cousin is waiting for you at the post-office. At any rate, we ’ll go there first and see. ”

Dan had rambled a long way from State Street. As he made his way back, keeping close to the policeman, it gave him rather a queer feeling to notice that every now and then some one in the crowd eyed sharply first the policeman, then him, evidently thinking he was under arrest. It was a new thing for Parson Strong’s son to feel as if he were not respectable, and by no means an agreeable sensation. Dan was glad enough when the quaint gables of an

old brick building greeted his eye, and his friend, the policeman, said, —

“That’s the old State House. Now keep a sharp look out for your cousin.”

“There he is now,” cried Dan, joyfully. “Good-by. I’m ever and ever so much obliged to you.”

“Not a bit of it. That’s my business,” said the bluff policeman, hastening out into the street, to straighten out a snarl of horses and vehicles, and separate the two swearing teamsters in the middle of the snarl, neither of whom would yield an inch to the other.

Otis stood looking anxiously up and down the street.

“Well, I never was quite so glad to see any one in my life, I believe,” he said, as Dan appeared. “I was all absorbed in looking at the parade, and supposed you were right by me. When I found you were missing I did n’t know what to do. After waiting there awhile, hoping you would turn up, I concluded my best plan was to come to the post-office, as I had told you I would go there next, and see if you would n’t find your way here.”

“I don’t know what I should have done but

for that policeman," said Dan. "All the same, I was glad enough to get away from him. I began to feel as if I had stolen something."

"You don't look like a very hard case," said Otis, laughing, looking at the round, honest face, and fresh, rosy cheeks of his cousin. "Well, I'm glad we got together again, anyway. I was afraid you would lose the rest of your sight-seeing."

After they had inspected the old State House, and the scene of the Boston massacre, Otis said, —

"Now we will go to Faneuil Hall."

The rush and roar of the city almost deafened Dan's unaccustomed ears, and the high buildings each side the narrow, dirty streets, shutting out the blessed sunlight, gave him a stifled feeling, made him feel oppressed, shut in, as he pushed through the crowds at Otis's heels, careful not to lose sight of him again.

As they dashed across a crowded street, and landed at Faneuil Hall, Dan said, —

"There's a good deal more going on in Boston, but give me Hackmatack to live in."

Otis saw that Dan looked jaded.

"You're tired, I guess," he said.

"I am," said Dan, "and I don't see why. I can walk ten miles at home, and not mind it much. But now my feet and legs ache so, and I am so tired I feel as I could n't go much farther."

"It's walking on the pavements, I guess, and the noise," said Otis. "You're not used to it. Then you've had a hard journey, and an early breakfast. It must be noon; let's go into the market and get a luncheon before we go any farther."

Dan gladly assented, for the keen salt air had made him faint with hunger. Otis took him through the market, — a novel and interesting sight to Dan, especially the fish market. Whom should they run into here but Mr. Haskins, who always had orders to bring home fresh fish, among his other purchases for his customers, bought with the money from the sale of their produce.

"Having a good time, Daniel?" he asked.

"Capital!" said Dan.

"Well, make the most of it. I'm just a tearin' round, tryin' to get all my errands done to-day."

Mr. Haskins gave Dan a part of the money for which he had sold Mr. Strong's pork, and

the sum realized from Dan's fowls, that Dan might settle with his aunt for the purchases she was making.

In the market the boys found an eating-stall, where they refreshed themselves with hot coffee and sandwiches. It was a luxury to sit down, even on the high wooden stools before the counter, and eat and drink at their leisure, and Dan felt so refreshed afterwards that he said, —

“Well, Otis, I'm all right again now, and ready for another pull.”

“We'll go up into Faneuil Hall, then,” said Otis.

Dan was glad to see the venerable hall, the Cradle of Liberty, and gazing about its empty space, half fancied he could still hear the echoes of the famous voices of the past, that had made its walls ring with eloquent appeals for freedom.

From Faneuil Hall they went down to the Long Wharf. Here Dan felt that he almost touched Europe and Asia, as he inhaled the strange, foreign odors, saw the great ships discharging their cargoes, and the heavily laden drays coming and going, while foreign-looking sailors, who spoke in unknown tongues, jostled against him in the crowd.

"I should like to go to Europe," said Dan.

"I mean to, sometime," said Otis. "I mean to go in a steamboat, too."

"I never saw a steamboat," said Dan.

"I'm going to give you a short ride on one now," said Otis.

He led the way to the East Boston ferry. Dan felt a little nervous at first, as the ferry boat shook and shuddered with the throb of the machinery, and he remembered how he had heard his grandmother tell that these steamboats often blew up, scattering their passengers in small fragments to the four quarters of the compass. But as nothing of the sort happened he gradually forgot his fears, and vastly enjoyed the rapid, strong motion of the boat ploughing through the waves, and the view of the harbor all alive with craft of all sorts, from tiny row-boats to huge four-masters. The novel scene was like a picture to the country boy, — a picture that he often recalled among Hackmatack hills, when he read anything about the ocean.

They next went to Copp's Hill Burying-Ground. From this height they looked over to Charlestown, and Dan saw Bunker Hill, and the monument being erected thereon, now about

two thirds done, with the staging around it. Here, too, Dan saw the graves of Cotton and Increase Mather, and the old North Church, from whose steeple the lantern shone that started Paul Revere on his famous ride the night before the fights at Lexington and Concord. Altogether, Dan felt that he was seeing a great deal of history, and should have much to tell when he reached home. Many a person goes to Europe now-a-days and does n't see as much of interest as did Dan in his one day in Boston.

The afternoon began to wane now, and they started for Cambridge.

"I hoped we should get home in time," said Otis, "for me to take you out to see our new cemetery at Mt. Auburn. It is a lovely spot, and a favorite walk of the Harvard students. But I guess you are tired enough, without going any farther."

"Yes, I am pretty tired," admitted Dan, "and I feel, too, as if my head were about full, I've seen so much. I'm afraid it would burst if I tried to put any more into it."

Dan had a cordial welcome back from his uncle and aunt, and Aunt Susan said, —

"I have written your grandmother a short letter about the goods I bought, so I need not trouble you even to undo the packages."

Dan was glad of this, and still more glad when supper was announced, and he found the savory odor that had been filling his hungry nostrils meant oysters. Only once or twice in his whole life had Dan tasted oysters. In the evening his Uncle Jedediah talked with him about fitting for college.

"Otis, here, is going to Harvard," he said, "and certainly one of your father's sons should go through the college. It is the tradition of your family, Daniel. Why, your first ancestor in this country was a minister, and the line of ministers runs straight down from him to your father."

"I know it," said Dan. "Perhaps I should like to go to college, but I don't think I should want to be a minister."

"Well, time will tell," said his uncle. "If I get up to Hackmatack next summer as I hope to, to see mother and the old place and all the friends, I will talk with your father about his intentions for you."

Dan was glad to go to bed soon after supper.

Early the next morning he said good-by to his kind friends, and Otis escorted him to Wilde's Hotel. Here was a busy scene indeed. Wilde's was headquarters for all the stage-coaches running from Boston to all parts of New England. This morning the great stages, each drawn by four fine horses, were dashing up, discharging passengers, taking them on, loading and unloading baggage, and there was a great coming and going, and general bustle and flying about. Mr. Haskins soon drove out, with his big sleigh loaded with fresh fish, oysters, sugar, tea, and coffee, to pay for which his customers had sent their produce. People living inland only enjoyed fresh fish, oysters, etc., at rare intervals, when an opportunity offered to send to Boston in the winter. Dan mounted to his seat.

"Good-by, Otis," he said. "I shall not forget the good time I've had in Boston very soon. Be sure to come up to Hackmatack next summer."

"I will if I can, you may depend," said Otis, half wishing he were going now, the big sleigh looked so inviting, and Dan had given him such glowing accounts of the coasting and skating in Hackmatack.

Dan admired the skill with which Mr. Haskins guided his horses through the crowded streets, and did not offer to take the reins himself until they were well out on the country roads. It was a gray, chilly morning. Mr. Haskins said, —

“I'm afraid we're in for a big snow-storm. We must get over all the ground we can before it sets in.”

So saying, he touched up his horses, and kept them at their highest speed, they having a much lighter load than when going down.

Along in the afternoon the snow began to fall, at first in a few small flakes, squeezed, apparently, out of the frozen sky. Then they came thicker and thicker, and larger and larger, like great fleecy feathers, till they blinded Dan's eyes so he could hardly see as they rode into the teeth of the storm; and he was glad to draw his cap visor well down over his nose, and snuggle down under the buffalo robe.

“How can you see to drive, Mr. Haskins?” he said.

“Oh, I'm an old soger, you know, used to bein' out in all sorts of weather. The fact is, I don't see much. The horses know where they

are a goin' as well as I do myself, and they jest go ahead without much drivin'."

The horses shook their heads impatiently, and showed plainly that they did not like the snow that blew in their eyes, and coated them white all over; but they pressed on all the faster towards the warm stable, and before dark the travellers reached Leominster, and put up at the tavern there for the night.

"Well, so far, so good," said Mr. Haskins, as he and Dan stamped and brushed the snow off before going in to the warm fire. "We've made first-rate time to-day. How we shall come out to-morrow, I don't know. The wind's a-risin', and it acts to me as if it might drift bad. But we won't borrow trouble. It comes fast enough without borrowin', generally. We must take an early start to-morrow, so as to make a long day of it, for it's like to be hard sleighin', I reckon."

The next morning the snow had ceased falling, but it was still cloudy, and a high wind was blowing, filling the air full of driving snow, blown hither and thither by the antics of the wind.

Mr. Haskins always carried a shovel in his

sleigh, for emergencies, but now he borrowed another at the tavern. They went over the hills of Westminster, and then struck down into the valley of the Miller's River, following the windings of that stream to Athol. More than once did they come to great drifts, where Dan's strong young arms were able to lend valuable aid. Often they both got out and shovelled a passage through otherwise impassable drifts, packed hard as if by solid pressure. It was so cold, riding against the piercing wind, that Dan was sure he should have frozen but for this brisk exercise of shovelling, which sent him back into the sleigh glowing all over with warmth.

They had thus shovelled through many small drifts, but along in the afternoon they came to a place where a slanting drift filled the road for several rods ahead.

"Whew!" said Mr. Haskins, "this is a buster! What are we goin' to do now, I wonder."

"Can't we two shovel it out enough so we can get through?" asked Dan.

"No. It would take us a week of Sundays to shovel that out."

Finally, after getting out and inspecting the drift, Mr. Haskins said, "I don't know, — I guess we'll try shovellin' down the highest side on 't. Then, it's packed so hard, I should n't wonder if I could lead the team through."

After shovelling a while, Mr. Haskins said, —
"Now you get in, Dan, and take the reins, and I'll lead 'em through. Be sure and keep on the upper side."

Mr. Haskins led the horses in. They sank half-way to their bodies, plunging and rearing, but still struggling on. The sleigh tipped and lurched like a ship in a storm, but Dan kept on the upper side to help balance it. All went well till they came to a soft place in the drift, when suddenly the lower runner sank in, and over went the sleigh, burying Dan under an avalanche of buffalo robes, oyster kegs, parcels and packages of all sorts.

Mr. Haskins kept tight hold of the restive horses, and a man from a farmhouse at a little distance hurried to their aid, lifting the sled body, and pulling Dan out from underneath, all white with snow.

Dan laughed as soon as he could get his breath, and said, —

"I did n't keep on the upper side that time, Mr. Haskins."

"Better laugh than cry," said Mr. Haskins. "Are you all right?"

"All right," sang out Dan, cheerily. For his part, he rather enjoyed this adventure. He and the farmer gathered up the packages, and reloaded the sleigh.

"Groceries are fallin', ain't they, Haskins?" said the farmer, chuckling at his own wit.

"You just help me out of this scrape, and you'll see," said Mr. Haskins. "Now we'll try it again. Get up," he said to his horses; Dan and the farmer held the sleigh up on each side, and so they finally succeeded in getting through. Then Mr. Haskins let the farmer have a keg of oysters at greatly reduced price, and he went home to rejoice the hearts and stomachs of his family with this stroke of good luck.

This was the worst drift they encountered. The horses, whom the cold and wind made very impatient, went at a furious pace in all the sheltered places where the road was free from drifts, so that, in spite of all their delays, they reached Hackmatack Saturday evening. Mr. Haskins

declined Dan's urgent invitation to stop at his father's house. His home lay some miles farther on, and he said he must push on, and get there before Sunday.

Great was the excitement at home when Dan arrived with all his parcels, and the bloom of travel fresh upon him. Every one plied him with questions.

"How are Jedediah's folks?" asked grandma. "Were they glad to see you?"

"What objects of interest were you able to see, Daniel?" asked his father.

"Oh, yes, Dan, tell us all about everything you saw," said Becky.

"I don't know hardly what I did see, I saw so much," said Dan. "Boston's a big place, and there's more to see there than I ever imagined there was in the world."

"Do give the poor boy a chance to get warm, and eat a bite," said grandma. "He must be hungry."

"Hungry's no name for it," said Dan, as he sat down to the waiting table.

"While you're eating, Dan, we'll be opening the bundles," said Becky.

"Here's your present, Becky," said Dan, handing her a long parcel.

“Oh, it’s a doll! I know it’s a doll!” cried Becky, feeling the head through the paper.

Sure enough, it was a beautiful china doll, with coal-black eyes and hair, and plump, red, very red, cheeks.

“I shall never play with her, she’s too lovely,” said Becky, lost in admiration. “I shall play with Sophronia, and keep this one to look at. I thank you so much, Dan. I’ll pick chickens again for you.”

Grandma was pleased with her black bombazine, and the blue delaine with white polka spots for Becky, and Lyddy Ann liked her crimson alpine, and every one went into raptures over the big coal-scuttle leghorn bonnet, trimmed inside and out with wreaths of apple-blossoms, which Aunt Susan had selected for Priscilla, and which she wrote was the latest fashion. A model of elegance, every one thought it. The minister plunged eagerly into his new books, and heard nought of the lively chatter going on around him.

When Dan related his various experiences many were the exclamations at all he had seen, and grandma said, —

“It’s a merciful providence that the boy got

home alive. I wonder he was n't killed, — run over, or blown up by some of those steam engines. I don't believe in meddling much with such things. The further off they keep from me, the better I'm suited. Boys are so dreadful venturesome."

"Of course Dan would want to see the steam-cars and steamboats," said 'Rasmus, who only wished he had had the same chance. But 'Rasmus was happy, for Uncle Jedediah had said that there would be no difficulty in getting him a small position in some wholesale house, where he could work his way up if he did well. Erasmus already saw his way worked up to the very top, and himself a wealthy Boston merchant, probably living in one of those elegant houses on Beacon street, of which Dan had given so glowing a description that Becky felt they must surpass even the gorgeous palaces described in the Arabian Nights, a fascinating book that Peri Drake had lately loaned her.

"I guess I'd better run the warming-pan through your bed to-night, Daniel," said grandma, looking affectionately at him over her glasses. "You ought to go to bed real warm after

being so chilled, or you might have a spell of sickness."

Dan did not reject the offer of the warming-pan. After his experience of the coldness and indifference of the great world outside it seemed good to be at home again, and be pampered by grandma.

Everything at home looked strange to Dan, and he felt as if he had been gone at least a year. But the next morning, as they glided along in the sleigh to church, and the peaceful Sunday sunlight fell on the still, wide, white fields and swelling hills of Hackmatack, so pure under their covering of new-fallen snow, and Mt. Zoar towered grandly up before him, Dan said, —

"Boston's a big place, and you can see and learn lots there, but Hackmatack's the pleasantest. Boston is so noisy, and dirty, and there's such a rush you feel all the time as if you had to look out or you'd be trampled under foot, and nobody would care either if you were."

"I am truly glad to hear these expressions from you, my son," said Mr. Strong. "I feared you might return discontented with home and its quiet ways."

“No, sir,” said Dan. “Home’s the best place.”

Long after Dan had settled down to his regular life again events in the Strong family were reckoned from “the time when Dan went to Boston.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EPISODE OF SNOOZER.

A GREAT deal may happen in only a week. So Dan learned as soon as Becky had an opportunity to pour forth her sorrows to him.

"What *dreadful* thing do you suppose has happened while you were away, Dan?" she asked. "Snoozer is gone!"

"Gone?" asked Dan.

"Yes, he disappeared Wednesday. The last time I saw him was Tuesday evening. He was so loving and beautiful that night. He got up in my lap, and rubbed his head against me so affectionately, and played so pretty, just like a kitten, with a bit of string. And I haven't seen him since, and I'm afraid he's d-d-dead!" And here Becky burst into a flood of tears.

Mr. Strong looked disturbed at Becky's distress, and rose, saying, "I must be at work," and hastily disappeared into his study, while

Lyddy Ann hurried out into the kitchen, banging the door after her. Grandma looked uneasy too.

"Pooh, pooh, Becky," she said; "I would n't make such a fuss about an old cat. A little girl that has just got such a nice new doll right from Boston ought not to be taking on this way."

"D-dolls are nice," sobbed Becky, "but they're not human, like Snoozer. He loved me, and dolls can't love me."

"I'll get you another kitten the next time I go up to Grandma Bullard's," said Dan. "She's got some real pretty ones."

"Yes, Dan, I wish you would," said grandma.

"It won't do any good," said Becky. "I shall never love any other kitty as I did Snoozer. He was my dear child."

"Well, it's too bad," said Dan. "I shall miss the old fellow myself. It won't seem natural not to see him around. See here, Becky, I want to show you a new game that your cousin Esther taught me in Boston. It's called 'tit-tat-toe.' First you draw lines on the paper, like this."

Dan began drawing, and gradually Becky

became interested, and forgot her troubles for the time. But she did not cease to mourn for the dear departed as days and weeks passed, and Snoozer's accustomed haunts saw him no more.

Now the sad truth was, there had been a conspiracy in the family against the two friends, Becky and Snoozer. Lyddy Ann "hated" cats, as she was free to say, and was always scolding about Snoozer.

"A great lazy cat, always round under foot! I expect to fall over him and break my neck some day, when I'm a tearin' round in a drivin' hurry. He's nothin' but an everlastin' bother, lyin' round before the fire, expectin' to be fed three times a day, same's folks. He ought to go to work and catch the rats and mice that are eatin' the house down, and not be mewin' round all day under my feet."

"I don't think myself he's good for anything," said grandma. "I have n't seen him have a mouse for months."

"He would n't have one unless it ran into his mouth," said Lyddy Ann. "He's too fat and lazy to stir. I wish you'd get 'Rasmus to kill him."

"I don't exactly want to do that," said grandma. "They say you won't have any luck for seven years if you kill a cat. Besides, I don't think I could get 'Rasmus to do it, Becky sets such store by the cat. I must get rid of him some other way."

Mr. Strong was going over to Winchester Wednesday, as it happened. So his mother proposed to him that he should then carry the cat so far away that it would never return. Mr. Strong objected, —

"I am afraid Becky will feel badly. She seems very fond of the cat."

"Oh, children soon forget," said grandma. "'Out of sight, out of mind,' with them."

In short, the feminine influence in his household was too strong for the minister, and overbore his own judgment. When he was about starting for Winchester Lyddy Ann snatched up Snoozer, who was peacefully dreaming before the kitchen fire, little thinking of harm, and before he knew what had happened to him he was in the box under the cutter seat driving off towards Winchester. What Snoozer's reflections were as he rode along, no one will ever know.

When Mr. Strong was about four miles from home he came to a large barn near the road, evidently belonging to a comfortable-looking farmhouse standing farther back. When the barn was between him and the house Mr. Strong stopped, threw back the buffalo robe, and opened the box. Out leaped Snoozer wildly, flying to the barn and under it as if twenty dogs were at his heels.

"I presume he will find a good home there," said Mr. Strong, striving to comfort his conscience, which was not wholly at ease, and pricked him still more that night when Becky began to wonder where Snoozer could be.

"I guess he's out at the cornhouse," she said, going to the back door, and calling tenderly, —
"Snoozer, Snoozer! Come, Snoozer!"

The sound of the childish voice calling her pet in vain, as he well knew, smote Mr. Strong's heart painfully, and made him feel remarkably like a hypocrite.

"Do you know where Snoozer is, Lyddy Ann?" asked Becky, coming back into the kitchen when no Snoozer came cheerfully running, head and tail up, as usual at her call.

"No, I don't," said Lyddy Ann, shortly.

"How should I know where that pesky old cat is? I don't care where he is, so long's he keeps out of my way."

"He isn't a pesky old cat," said Becky indignantly, leaving the kitchen.

Lyddy Ann's answer troubled her own conscience, which was of the stanch old New England kind, unused to lying.

"Well, I don't care, it's true," thought she, justifying herself to herself. "My eyes ain't sharp enough to look through all the hills, four miles away, and see jest where that cat is."

Becky's sorrowful laments for Snoozer, as time went on and he came not, made all the conspirators regret their action. Moreover, the rats and mice, even if Snoozer had caught none of them, seemed well aware that he was no longer on guard. They were heard at all hours of the day, scampering merrily up the walls and scuttling across the ceilings, and at night, as grandma said, "their goings on were something awful." Such groanings and squeakings, such weird rattling of chains, dragging of dead bodies, and trampling of wild horses seemed to be going on in the attic and up and down the walls, that every one's sleep was disturbed, and

Becky was afraid to go to bed alone. They ate the apples and potatoes in the cellar, and gnawed a hole through into the kitchen pantry, where traces of their presence were found in half-devoured pies, and nibbled morsels of all sorts. Worst of all, they often ran across Lyddy Ann's feet when she opened the pantry door, evenings, "scarin' the life out of her," as she said.

'Rasmus set the big wooden box-trap in the cellar, but after one rat had been caught not another would enter it, no matter how tempting the bait of toasted cheese. Even Lyddy Ann was at last brought to confess that Snoozer had been a valuable member of the family, much as appearances had been against him.

'Rasmus, as well as Becky, had a great piece of news for Dan, something of immense interest to him.

"We're going to have a singing-school, Dan," he said.

"Really?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"Yes, sure. Mr. Foster came over to see father about it while you were in Boston. Father brought it up in the Wednesday evening meeting. He said we had n't had a singing-school for two years, and our choir was getting

out of practice, and we should want to have some extra singing for the church dedication next fall, and he was in favor of having a singing-school. Everybody agreed, and the money is all raised, and Mr. Foster's coming here in two weeks, as soon as he has finished his school over in Deerfield."

"Good," said Dan. "I never was so glad of anything in my life. I hope father will let me go this year. I'm sure I'm big enough now."

"Of course he won't," said 'Rasmus. "They don't want such little fellows as you."

But Dan hastened to his father, who, to his joy, consented that he should go, on condition, of course, that Mr. Foster accepted his voice as suitable for choir purposes. Dan felt that he could hardly wait for the slow moving two weeks to roll around, and bring the beginning of singing-school and the end of his suspense.

Dan was welcomed back to school by the other boys as one who had travelled long and far and had remarkable adventures. If he was apt to say rather often "when I was in Boston," the boys overlooked it, as being no more than you ought to expect of a traveller of such ex-

periences. Mr. Wyatt, who was now boarding at Deacon Kellogg's, asked Dan all about his adventures with much interest. He saw that Dan took hold of his studies with fresh zeal, and felt that his trip had given him larger, more manly views of life and the world.

School was a busy place these days. Not only did the schoolroom really hum with industry all day long, but frequently at night its lighted windows proclaimed that either a spelling or ciphering school was going on. Friday nights the lyceum met there, when all the ability of the town gathered in, and great questions were discussed, such as, "Which has done most harm to the world, rum or gunpowder?" "Is a mob ever justifiable?" and the like. Dan liked to attend these wordy contests, and hear the affairs of the world straightened out by the wise men of Hackmatack.

Although the spelling-schools met for solid work, yet considerable fun was sprinkled in, and they were regarded as a "good time" by the country children, who had few gayeties. There was the excitement of choosing sides, the glory if you were a good speller, — and so contended for by both sides, — the agony if you

were left till the last, and only taken as a "Hobson's choice;" then the straining of every nerve as the ranks gradually thinned and the struggle grew closer and closer. One often made a mistake in a word he knew perfectly well, from over anxiety. When school was out some of the big boys — bold spirits, not afraid of anything or anybody — "saw home" some of the older girls, which made plenty of fun for the younger boys.

One bright moonlight evening 'Rasmus, Dan, and Becky came home from spelling-school across-lots on the hard crust, their shadows stretching out on its white surface like black silhouette giants, as they skipped lightly home. To walk on the crust gives one such a light, uplifted feeling.

They came into the house with red cheeks and bright eyes, glowing from their long, brisk walk, or rather run, in the clear, cold air.

"Children," said grandma, "you'd better all sit up to the fire and toast your feet well before prayers."

"Oh, grandma, we're melting, we're warm's we can be," protested the young folks.

"You may feel so now, just coming into the warm room; but it's a very cold night, and

you will sleep better to toast your feet before you go off to bed in the cold," persisted grandma.

So the children sat around the blazing fire, and discussed the spelling-school as they warmed their feet. Dan was full of triumph because he had spelled down several boys older than himself.

"I came awful nigh going down on 'schedule,'" he said. "I all but left out the 'h'—remembered it in the nick of time."

"Becky did first-rate for a little girl," said 'Rasmus, who having come out victor, spelling down the whole school, was so elated that he could afford to be generous.

"I should have held out ever so much longer," said Becky, "if Mr. Wyatt had n't given out 'yacht.' I never can remember where the 't' goes."

Here the intense stillness of the winter's night out-doors was broken by a strange noise, so unexpected as to be startling,—a clattering and scratching about, right at the north window, as if somebody or something were there.

Every one started.

"What's that?" asked grandma.

"I'm afraid!" said Becky, putting one hand on 'Rasmus.

Mr. Strong went to the window, and raised the curtain to see what was the matter. Even he started when two great, green, glassy eyes glared in at him.

Becky screamed, and even grandma so far forgot herself as to exclaim, "Merciful Goodness!"

"Why, it's a cat!" said Dan.

"It's Snoozer himself!" exclaimed Mr. Strong, almost as joyfully as Becky herself might.

"Well, I never did!" said grandma, looking in wonder at her son.

He opened the window, and Snoozer leaped quickly in, to be clasped to the bosom of his overjoyed little mistress.

"Dear, dear Snoozer! did you come back to your own mistress?" said she, fondly stroking his poor sides, no longer sleek and glossy, but lank and lean enough. Evidently Snoozer's lot had fallen in hard places. His fur was rough and dirty, and he was, as grandma said, "thin as a rail." Becky took him out into the kitchen, and set before him a royal feast, worthy of the prodigal's return.

Lyddy Ann, whose surprise at seeing him

again was inexpressible, said graciously, much to Becky's astonishment,—

“Well, I must say I'm actually glad to see that cat back again. I hope now we'll be rid of some of them rats that are tormentin' the very life out of me.”

The next day she said confidentially to grandma, “Did you ever see the beat o' that cat's findin' his way home all that four miles, by himself, when he was carried there shet up tight in a box? It seems sorter preternatural. I'd never dare lay hands on him again. I reckon he's a sort of a witch.”

It did Becky's heart good to see Snoozer, after a tremendous surfeit of meat and milk, basking in his old place before the fire, washing his face and purring loudly to express the joy that filled his little heart.

The very next evening loud screams were heard from the kitchen. Dan and 'Rasmus, who were studying in the keeping-room, rushed out. There was Lyddy Ann standing upon a rush-bottomed chair, with her dress drawn tightly around her ankles, the image of lively terror; and there was Snoozer with a large rat he had just caught in the pantry, which he

would let run a little ways, then pounce upon and bring back to the chair foot.

"That cat's a doin' on 't a purpose to plague me, I know he is," said Lyddy Ann. "He looked up at me so human-like when he brought that great rat out of the pantry and dropped it at my feet, as much as to say, 'Ain't I good for anything?' For goodness' sake, boys, do kill it before it runs up the chair legs. Ow-w!" screamed Lyddy Ann again, hopping a foot high, as the rat made a wild dart in her direction.

The boys wanted no better fun. They seized poker and tongs and chased the rat noisily about, knocking down pans, kicking over pails and chairs, bumping into the table, tumbling over each other, and making no end of a racket. Finally, the poor rat was overcome by numbers, and slaughtered.

"There! He'll never nibble our mince pies any more," said 'Rasmus, holding up the vanquished enemy by the tail.

"Do see how proud and sort of satisfied with himself Snoozer does look!" said Dan.

"Don't tell me that cat ain't a witch," said Lyddy Ann, coming down from her perch. "I

322 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

declare I'm afraid of him. He's too knowin' by half."

And so Snoozer conquered the conspirators, and was held henceforth in high respect, and quiet reigned once more in all the holes and corners of the parsonage.

CHAPTER XX.

SINGING-SCHOOL.

BEHOLD, at last, rolling time was forced to bring around the evening of the first singing-school, — an evening eagerly anticipated by many other young folks in Hackmatack besides Daniel. Sleighs came jingling merrily in from all over town, until fifty or sixty persons were assembled in the tavern hall, ranging all the way from a few girls and boys of Dan's set to young married people like Mr. and Mrs. Orrin Plunkett, who were among the main-stays of the choir. Every one in town with the slightest pretensions to a voice was determined to attend singing-school.

It was considered a great privilege to sing under Mr. Foster's direction. He was noted as a musician throughout the whole region. He was a well-to-do farmer in Rowe, with a remarkably fine tenor voice, a passionate love of music,

and a gift of developing in others all the musical capacity in them. For years the leisure of his winters had been devoted to teaching singing-school up and down Franklin County, — a labor undertaken quite as much for love as money.

The tavern hall was a bare, long room, built partly over the horse-shed, — a cold, barn-like place. The would-be pupils sat on a bench built against the wall, running around three sides of the hall. There was a table on the fourth side, piled high with the new singing-books, the Handel and Haydn Collection. On it stood also a sperm-oil lamp. The hall was farther lighted by tin reflectors fastened to the walls, in which tallow candles burned. The curtainless windows looked out into the black night. A great box stove stood near the table. Although its rusty top was red hot, yet one could see his breath at the farther end of the room where Dan sat.

But what cared Dan if his toes were numb with cold, and he could feel the wind blow up his legs through the cracks in the floor, making cold shivers creep up his back? Wasn't he at last achieving the long-cherished desire of his heart, going to singing-school, with sitting

in the choir in view,—that is, if Mr. Foster accepted his voice? Dan's heart alternated between hope and fear.

His suspense would soon be over, for now Mr. Foster entered,—a large man with a kindly face, yet with a resolute glint in his eye that indicated he was not to be lightly trifled with. Mr. Foster was well known to be an absolute monarch. There was no questioning his authority, and order always reigned in his schools.

“Well,” said Mr. Foster, looking pleasantly around, “there ought to be a good deal of music here. Let's see what you can do. Let me hear you raise and fall the notes.”

He struck his tuning-fork on the table, to give the singers the pitch. Then the sixty pupils opened their mouths, and such a volume of sound poured forth, as “Fa, sol, la, fa, sol, la, sol” mounted to the ceiling in all sorts of tones, some anything but melodious.

“Plenty of noise, anyway,” said Mr. Foster. “Now I will hear you by threes.”

Three now sang the notes at a time, just as they sat, Mr. Foster standing near and listening closely. In this way his critical ear soon detected who had musical voices and ears, and

who had none. Then began the process of what Ki Kellogg called "sifting the sheep from the goats." Those pupils supposed to have voices were sent one side the hall to sit, the voiceless the other.

To Dan's immense joy, he was sent to join the ranks of the elated sheep; while poor Ki, who had no music in his voice, though plenty in his soul, but who pined for the fun of attending singing-school, was classed with the goats. Mr. Foster gave each one another trial, singly, that he might be sure to make no mistake; but his first decision was almost invariably correct.

The rejected ones now went home, excepting some who had to wait for sisters or friends. Mr. Foster then tested the voices singly again, and seated the school permanently, dividing them into first and second trebles, bass, and tenors. Dan was put among the second trebles. Almira Abbot led the second trebles. She had a sweet, rich, powerful contralto voice; something in her voice when she sang a solo always made Dan feel like crying. Several other young ladies, with Cyrus Dole and Dan, made up the second trebles. Although Dan was delighted to sing under Almira's lead, yet

he felt much sustained by the company of his friend Cyrus, not exactly liking to sit with the girls unsupported.

The singing-school was now well organized, and settled down to solid work. When now they raised the notes the volume of sound was so harmonious and agreeable, as well as strong, that Mr. Foster looked much pleased, and said, —

“Very good. Very good indeed. We are going to do some good work here, I see.”

He set them to singing by note some exercises in the front part of the singing-book, and finally a hymn-tune. Each part, bass, tenor, trebles, was drilled separately. Then all were made to sing together, Mr. Foster walking up and down before the singers, nodding his head, beating time vigorously with his hand, sometimes singing with them, heart and soul all absorbed as he vigilantly directed the whirlwind of melody that swelled around him.

Electa Phinney, who sat next Dan, thought this a favorable time, when Mr. Foster was so fully engaged, to pass a three-cornered note to 'Liphalet Jones, who sat among the bass singers. She gave it to Dan. Dan nudged Cyrus, and whispered hastily behind his book, —

"Here, Electa wants you to pass this note to 'Liphalet. Hurry up!"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Foster in a voice of thunder, giving his singing-book a resounding slap with his hand.

The singers stopped midway in the hymn, and stood thunder-struck. Dead silence reigned, — an awful pause. Dan's heart beat as if it would jump out of him.

Finally Mr. Foster broke the dead silence by saying sternly, —

"You may as well all understand, right away, that I will not tolerate any nonsense, or interruptions of any sort while we are singing. We are here to *sing*. Those who do not want to sing, I shall promptly excuse from further attendance on the school, no matter who they are. You understand. Now go on; begin again at the beginning."

Electa was blushing crimson, while poor Dan literally shook in his shoes. He thought, —

"I wish 'Lecta Phinney was somewhere else. I can't tell of a girl, and Mr. Foster will blame me, of course. Pretty business, if I should get turned out of singing-school, for no fault of my own either!"

It was some time before he regained sufficient composure to have any voice, though he kept up the motions of singing.

At half-past eight Mr. Foster said, —

“We will adjourn now till Wednesday evening. I am greatly pleased with the material I find here. We are going to do good work, and plenty of it. In the course of an evening or two, I shall let you try some anthems. The singing-school is to close with a concert in the church. An admittance fee will be charged, to help pay for the expense of this hall. You must be willing to work hard, and learn all the set pieces and anthems possible before the concert, that it may be one worthy of Mr. Strong’s parish.”

The idea of the concert animated all the singers, and was much discussed as they scattered to their homes. Most of the young ladies were escorted home by young men, on foot if they lived near the tavern, or in sleighs if living at a distance. The sleighs glided away over the hills in all directions, with their happy couples, and equally happy couples sauntered slowly along the highway. More than one marriage owed its origin to a winter’s singing-school.

Mr. Foster was to board around, beginning at Mr. Strong's. Dan brought old John and the cutter up to the door to take Mr. Foster home. He had been delighted to have him board at their house, but since the episode of the note felt ill at ease in Mr. Foster's presence and afraid of him. No sooner were they started, however, than Mr. Foster said, —

“Well, young man, I see you are as full of music as a bluebird in the spring.”

“Yes, sir,” said Dan, “I do love it.”

“Then you must attend sharply to business. You can't do anything in singing, or anything else worth doing at all, without giving your whole mind and soul to it.”

“I could n't help it to-night,” stammered out Dan, awkwardly.

“I know it,” said Mr. Foster, — “a silly girl's foolishness. The old story; the woman tempted me and I ate. I saw the whole performance; I have eyes in the back of my head. But don't let it happen again. You have an unusually good voice and correct ear, and you will make a singer if you give your mind to it.”

Dan was delighted at this praise from such an

authority as Mr. Foster, and resolved no effort should be wanting on his part.

Mr. Foster and Mr. Strong were equally pleased to meet again. They were friends of long standing, drawn together by a common love of music. Mr. Strong enjoyed hearing Mr. Foster sing, and Mr. Foster enjoyed the organ. So now a series of musical evenings followed, to the delight of the whole family, — evenings often prolonged, under the spell of enthusiasm, to the unprecedentedly late hour of ten o'clock.

There is no pleasure without its drawback, we are told. Mr. Foster was a slave to his pipe. An evening smoke was absolutely necessary to his existence. Grandma Strong, in whose eyes (and nose) tobacco smoke was the chief of abominations, tolerated the dense clouds of it that filled the study every evening with an amiability that astonished 'Rasmus and Dan. She felt it proper, however, to testify to the boys on the subject.

"Smoking's a most filthy, pernicious habit, and I hope I shall never live to see either of you boys guilty of it. But Mr. Foster's too old a dog to learn new tricks now, and his singing's

332 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

so like a — a seraph's that I don't care if his nasty tobacco smoke does put my eyes out, and choke my throat, and make the whole house smell like a bar-room; I'm willing to stand it for the sake of his music."

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO GREAT OCCASIONS.

"GRANDMA," said Dan, coming into her room in a fever of excitement, "can't Lyddy Ann hurry up the supper?"

"I know we are going to be late," said Becky, who followed close behind Dan.

"Why, it is n't dark yet," said grandma.

"Well, I know it; but we want to get over there real early, before all the Brook folks crowd in and get the best seats. There's going to be an awful jam."

"I've seen two sleighs go by over on the turnpike already," said Becky, "and I'm afraid we won't get any seats at all."

"Well," said grandma, "we must have supper a little earlier, I guess, seeing you're all in such a fluster about the show. Where's 'Rasmus?"

"Oh, he is n't coming home at all. He's too busy. He's got to help put up the cur-

tains, and borrow the reflectors from the tavern and put them up, and I don't know what else."

"Why, the boy 'll starve without any supper," said grandma, who knew the usually healthy state of 'Rasmus's appetite.

"He took a lot of doughnuts and cheese up in his pocket," said Dan.

Supper was cheerfully "hurried up" by Lyddy Ann, who was going to "the show" with Sam Hawks, and as fully impressed with the necessity of being on hand early to secure a good seat as were the children. Supper was a mere hollow mockery, as the excited children could eat little, and hurried away to the school house as soon as they could decently ask to be excused.

The winter term of the Centre School had closed to-day with a grand public examination in the afternoon, wherein the pupils had so shone that they covered both themselves and Mr. Wyatt with glory. Mr. Wyatt would now return to his studies in Williams College. The scholars would have felt badly to say good-by to him but that they knew that the committee had already engaged him to teach the school

the following winter. Every one agreed he was the best teacher ever known in Hackmatack. Never had the pupils learned so much, never had such excellent order been maintained, — and “without any thrashing, either,” as Nahum Phinney observed at the district meeting.

The scholars were sorry to have school end. Most of them lived widely scattered on farms, and rarely met, save on Sunday, when school was not in session. The boys over ten would not attend school until another winter. Joe Root and several others of the older boys would come no more. They had ciphered through interest, and could calculate the rate per cent on notes, and so were supposed to have all the education a farmer needed.

It was rather a pensive time for the big boys, but they found some consolation in exchanging cards with the older girls, — cards highly glazed, the giver's name being inscribed on scrolls issuing from the mouths of turtle-doves, all surrounded by wreaths of very red roses, and bearing below a couplet of sentimental verse.

“How many cards did you get, Hannah?” asked Luella Pettit.

“Six,” said Hannah.

336 *Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

"I had eight," said Luella, not without a touch of triumph.

These cards were carefully kept in boxes at home, as precious trophies.

The regret of the pupils at the close of school was tempered by joy at the grand closing exhibition to be given in the evening. There was a long-standing rivalry between the Centre school and the "Brook" school. This year they had agreed to unite in a closing exhibition, in which each was secretly resolved to outdo the other.

When the Brook pupils had hastened to announce that they should speak Addison's "Cato," the Centre scholars had decided to act "Pizarro." It was going to be such an event as had seldom occurred in Hackmatack, and the excitement ran high. "Play-acting" was a novelty except to a favored few, who had gone to the theatre when in Boston. Long before the hour fixed for the exhibition to open, every inch of not only sitting but standing room was taken. Dan and Becky, however, sat in the very front row, their knees almost touching the temporary stage.

"We shall not miss a single bit of it, shall

we, Dan?" said Becky, delighted with their good fortune.

"No, sir-ee," said Dan. "I meant to be right in front, if we did have to stand outside a while and wait for the doors to open."

Besides the candles in the tin reflectors, two oil lamps on the teacher's desk lighted the room. A curtain was stretched across one corner of the stage, to serve as a place for the exits and entrances. Scenery there was none.

Behind this curtain could now be heard loud stage whispers, titters, and giggles, audibly suppressed by muffled "'Sh! they'll hear you," from Cato and his fellow Romans; for the Brook scholars were to appear first.

Joe Root, as stage manager, now came out, ducked his head in a hasty bow, and said, not without visible embarrassment,—

"Ladies and gentlemen, the first thing on our programme is a flute solo by Mr. James Wyatt."

Loud clapping and stamping from the audience. How grand it seemed to Dan and Becky; how their eyes shone, and what a twitter of excitement they were in!

"It's going to begin now, Dan," said Becky, nudging him.

"'Sh! don't you suppose I know it?" said Dan, impatient lest he should lose a note of the flute solo.

Mr. Wyatt's flute sent out a bewitching melody, that quite entranced the audience, and put them in admirable humor for the "Cato," which now followed.

"I don't understand what they are talking about," whispered Becky, "but does n't it sound grand; and don't they stalk about and wave their sheets majestically?"

"Those are n't sheets, they're togas," said Dan, in the pride of superior knowledge.

"Oh, are they?" said Becky, more impressed than before. "They look just like sheets."

And, in fact, sheets they really were. Many older persons in the audience, like Becky, failed to appreciate the grandiloquent phrases, long-drawn sentences, and lofty flight generally of the "Cato." All the more were they impressed by it, and long and loud was the applause at the end.

The general feeling was voiced by Mr. Bigbee, who said to Captain Pratt, —

"That was a big thing, Captain. Do you think our young folks can come up to that?"

"Well, I don't know," said the captain. "They'll have to do mighty well to beat that."

The Brook parents sat up proudly, covered with glory, while the Centre parents began to look anxious, not able to more than half enjoy the sweet song which Mr. Foster had consented to sing between the acts, to the flute accompaniment of Mr. Wyatt. It was a new Scotch song, "Ye banks and braes of bonny Doon," whose tender melody rendered in Mr. Foster's melting tones, moved to tears those whose children were not in "Pizarro," and whose minds, therefore, were perfectly calm and free.

The Brook pupils had come forth, flushed with glory and loud declamation, and taken seats in the audience prepared to be quite critical, while the actors in "Pizarro" had disappeared. The question of the proper costume had been much discussed by the young actors. Finally, Tom Pratt had decided it by saying, —

"One thing's certain; nobody knows just what those old Peruvians and Spaniards used to wear, and nobody cares. And we could n't get it, if we did know. The main thing is to get up something showy, and just dazzle those Brook folks so they can't see. Now, I've an idea."

"Hurrah for Tom Pratt's idea!" cried Joe Root.

"Never you mind about the hurrahing, but listen to me," said Tom. "My cousin, Tim Houghton, in Northfield, belongs to the militia company over there, and I know he'd just as soon lend me his uniform as not."

"Capital!" said Joe. "I guess I can get one, too."

"Grandma Bullard has two or three cocked hats," said Erasmus, "and I guess Grandma Strong will lend our sword."

So a general military costume was decided on for the boys. The heroines decided to dress in white muslin, with their hair flowing down their backs, always, as every one knows, the proper costume for a damsel in distress.

These magnificent preparations had been kept as secret as possible, that no hint of them might leak out to Brook ears. So there was an immense and most gratifying sensation when Pizarro, Rolla, and the rest appeared, some in the radiance of full militia uniform, some in Grandma Bullard's cocked hats, with red sashes tied around their waists. Several of the young heroes wore swords at their sides, swords that

had seen real fighting on Revolutionary battle-fields in the hands of their ancestors, and stuck in Rolla's belt was Dan's precious horse-pistol with the flint lock.

"That's my pistol in Tom Pratt's belt," whispered Dan to Becky.

"Oh, Dan, is it really?" asked Becky, whose eyes were big with wonder at the gorgeous display before her, and who now felt that Dan was also taking a leading part, as she recognized his beloved pistol, familiar to her in Indian warfare at home, wherein it always played a prominent but harmless part, grandma never allowing it to be loaded.

"Pizarro" was enacted with much spirit, and was found by the audience much livelier and more blood-curdling than "Cato." Still, "Cato" was felt to be grand and imposing, and a general credit to Hackmatack, the correct thing to have done, — "sort o' classical," as Mr. Mosely said. Every one agreed that the whole entertainment had been a splendid success, and a great triumph for Hackmatack. All the Brook folks went home satisfied that their scholars had carried off the lion's share of the honors, while the Centre folks were content to let them think so,

342 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

because they *knew* their school had come out far ahead. So every one was satisfied.

Only a week after this the singing-school closed with a grand concert in the church. Under Mr. Foster's skilled lead the school had mastered most of the anthems in the "Handel and Haydn Collection," and some also from the "Ancient Lyre." The concert was to be held in the afternoon.

When the eventful day arrived not only all Hackmatack turned out to attend the concert, but sleighs drove in from all the adjoining towns, whither the fame of this unusual occasion had spread, and the old church was crowded. The singers, fifty strong, sat in long rows, seat above seat, in the gallery, in a state of much flutter and excitement, especially the young ladies, watching the people as they poured into the church.

By no means the least excited among the singers, or the least important member of the choir, in his own estimation, was our friend Daniel, sitting in the row of second trebles. This was the happiest moment of Dan's life. At last he had achieved his heart's desire, and was sitting in the choir. Moreover, this was going to be the grandest concert ever given in

Hackmatack or the whole region around, and he was part of it. Dan was dressed in his best, and his hair was brushed to a state of unnatural smoothness and glossiness. His eyes shone, and he was all a-quiver.

"Dan," whispered Cyrus, "there's the Hardings from New Salem just coming in; and there's the Moodys, and the Halls, and the Fields, and the Duttons, and the Houghtons from Northfield!"

"The whole county is coming, I believe," said Dan. "I see folks here from Athol, and Orange, too."

"I begin to feel nervous, don't you?" asked Cyrus.

"Not a bit," said Dan. "I like it. I wish we could begin now. There, there come father and Dr. Holman from Northfield. Now it will begin."

The two ministers walked with stately gravity up the broad aisle, and into the high pulpit. The whispers and rustling all over the crowded house subsided. People began to feel as if it were "meeting" when they saw the two ministers.

Mr. Strong opened the exercises by a fervent

prayer, in which he thanked God for having conferred upon poor, undeserving mortals this wonderful gift of music, — a foretaste, no doubt, of the joys known to the angelic host.

“May this interesting occasion be blessed to the everlasting welfare and spiritual uplifting of each soul present; and when on earth our voices shall be heard no more, and our ears shall be stopped, and our hearts cold in the last, long sleep that soon awaits us all, may we have lived so worthily, been so truly thy obedient and loving children here below, that our immortal part shall be permitted to join in those heavenly strains of the blessed above, who eternally chant thy praises to their harps of gold!”

So closed the prayer. The breathless silence reigning throughout the church told that it had gone home to the hearts of the audience, making even the most thoughtless realize, at least for the moment, the connecting link between earth and heaven, — invisible, but close and strong.

Now the violins and bass-voils began to scrape and tune up, — not a harmonious sound, but music in the ears of the expectant audience. Mr. Foster, standing up on the front seat, where all the singers could see him, gave a majestic

wave of his hand; there was the rustle of the choir coming into action, and then all the voices launched grandly out together in "Before Jehovah's awful throne," sung as a "set piece." When they came to this verse, —

"We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs;
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise,"

what a glorious outpouring of song there was. First one part, then another, took up the strain, till finally all came in together "with sou-ou-ou-, with sou-ou-oun-ding praise," in a mighty burst of melody that did indeed seem to rise "high as the heavens."

How Dan did sing! For once in his life it seemed to him he almost satisfied his soul; almost let out the flood of melody pent up within him. And how grandly Mr. Foster's hand swept back and forth, as he beat time, directing now this part, now that, master of all, and "riding on the storm."

Midway in the concert Dr. Holman of Northfield gave an interesting address on music, its origin, history, influence, etc. Then the singing was resumed with fresh zest. In truth, one

346 *Folly Good Times at Hackmatack.*

often hears much worse singing than this that to-day made the walls of the old Hackmatack church ring. To hear the Hackmatack choir let themselves out in "Majesty," when "glo-o-ry shone around," was to be almost raised up into the glory for the time.

The concert closed with a new set piece that delighted the audience, — "Watchman, tell us of the night." Abby Long sang the soprano solo, and Mr. Foster himself took the tenor, retiring with one of the violin-players to the back of the church. It thrilled Dan to hear Abby's sweet voice, so full of an inexpressible pathetic yearning that it brought tears to his eyes, he knew not why, as it soared up in, —

" Watchman, tell us of the night,
What its signs of promise are."

Then from the distance, responded the glorious tenor voice, with the violin supporting its strong, joyous strain, —

" Traveller, o'er yon mountain's height,
See that glory-beaming star !"

Finally, the whole choir came in on the refrain with a mighty burst of harmony that swept all before it, —

“Traveller, lo! the Prince of Peace,
Lo! the Son of God is come.
Lo! the Son of God is come.”

And so ended the concert. Mr. Strong, coming down from his pulpit, his own love of music deeply gratified by the sweet harmony that had filled his soul this evening, was still farther gratified by compliments on all sides from his friends from other towns, who could not enough praise the remarkable proficiency of the Hackmatack choir. For his part, Dan went home filled with the just pride of one who has been an important part of a great success.

The exhibition and concert practically closed the winter season in Hackmatack. Already, in the middle of the day, the eaves dripped, and the snow began to shrink away and look gray in the hollows, and the sun shone with a warmer glow, and Lyddy Ann said the pork-barrel was low, and grandma began to talk some about house-cleaning, and Dan's school trousers were wearing very thin; and, in short, there were many signs that another springtide would ere long glorify Hackmatack, as well as the rest of a waiting world.

THE END.

Mrs. Smith's Latest Colonial Stories

OLD DEERFIELD SERIES

By MARY P. WELLS SMITH

1. THE BOY CAPTIVE OF OLD DEERFIELD
 2. THE BOY CAPTIVE IN CANADA
 3. BOYS OF THE BORDER
 4. BOYS AND GIRLS OF SEVENTY-SEVEN
- Illustrated. Cloth. Each \$1.35 net

UNLIKE so many books written from the historical standpoint, her stories are lifelike and readable. . . . The everyday life of the times is pictured with the heroism and unflinching faith of settlers struggling to keep their homes in the wilderness. — *Springfield Republican*.

Mrs. Smith pictures realistically the hardships and self-denial endured by men and women whose bravery and patriotism never wavered in their efforts to found a nation. There is enough action in the story to hold the fancy of any boy, and enough history to make it informing. This series of books on Colonial history is of conspicuous excellence. — *Brooklyn Daily Times*.

No better books for the young on Colonial history have been written. — *St. Louis Globe Democrat*.

Young readers cannot fail to be impressed by Mrs. Smith's realistic pictures of the hardships and self-denial endured by the patriotic women who contributed to the independence of their country. The book will hold interest as a story, while giving an insight into the history of the period. — *Philadelphia Press*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., *Publishers*

34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

Historically Accurate Adventure Stories

“THE YOUNG PURITAN” SERIES

By MARY P. WELLS SMITH

1. THE YOUNG PURITANS OF OLD HADLEY
2. THE YOUNG PURITANS IN KING PHILIP'S WAR
3. THE YOUNG PURITANS IN CAPTIVITY
4. THE YOUNG AND OLD PURITANS OF HATFIELD

Illustrated. Cloth. Each \$1.35 net

MRS. Smith deserves very hearty commendation for the admirable pictures of Puritan life which are drawn with a skilful hand in this book (“Young Puritans of Old Hadley”). She has chosen a representative Puritan village as the scene, and the period of very early settlement of western Massachusetts for her story, a village which retains many of its early features to this day.—*The Churchman*, New York.

Mrs. Smith has proven that she can write as simple and natural a story of child-life when the scene is laid two hundred and fifty years ago as when she chooses to describe country life in the New England of the present century.—*Christian Register*.

She shows the same power of graphic description, the same faithful use of the best available material, and the same logical way of putting it into shape.—*Commercial Advertiser*, New York.

Mrs. Smith has made history live again in her life-like narrative. The children of to-day may well learn something of the sterner virtues in reading this story of the endurance and fortitude of children of two centuries ago.—*Springfield Republican*.

She catches the very spirit of Puritan life.—*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., *Publishers*
34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

111

d

This book should be returned
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred
by retaining it beyond the specified
time.

Please return promptly.

