

Red Hill was very still on this Indian summer afternoon as though it were in hiding from the railroads, mills and highways of an age of hurry. Upon its long, level crest it bore but three centers of life and a symbol: Maple House, The Firs and Elm House, half hidden from the road by their distinctive trees but as alive as the warm eyes of a veiled woman; and the church.

The church was but a symbol—a mere shell. Within, it presented the appearance of a lumber room in disuse, a playground for rats and a haven for dust. But without, all was as it had ever been; for the old church was still beloved. Its fresh white walls and green shutters and the aspiring steeple, towering into the blue, denied neglect and robbed abandonment of its sting.

In the shadow of its walls lay an old graveyard whose overgrown soil had long been undisturbed. Along the single road which cut the crest of the Hill from north to south were ruins of houses that once had sheltered the scattered congregation. But the ruins were hard to find for they too were overgrown by juniper, clematis and a crowding thicket of mountain-ash.

On these evidences of death and encroachment the old church seemed to turn its back as if by right of its fresh walls and unbroken steeple it were still linked to life. Through its small-paned windows it seemed to gaze contentedly across the road at the three houses, widely separated, that half faced it in a diminishing perspective. The three houses looked towards the sunrise; the church towards its decline.