

CHAPTER XXXI.

"OLD DAYS."

IN the record of a people the library and the museum have an important part. The books they read, the school books used, the domestic utensils, the clothes they made and wore, combine more than words to show the conditions met. The scanty materials and implements with which they conquered climate and soil were imperfect. The record is one of adaptation of everything presented by nature, that could be helpful. Tea was made from the dried leaves of the black currant bush; coffee from the roots of the dandelion, dried and browned. Wild mustard was welcomed as greens; every herb was carefully saved for use in sickness, in a land where physicians were few and far away. The forest furnished game, rivers and streams an abundant supply of fish. In the spring and fall were the migratory birds. Wild pigeons came in myriads. They were expected and depended upon as a regular return of food. Wild berries of various kinds were plentiful. These were dried, and preserved with maple sugar for winter use. When the day closed and the tallow dip was lighted the knitting basket and sewing were brought out. When the school lessons were learned a portion of the evening was devoted to knitting. Men were not ashamed to knit, especially the Scotchmen. Germans also knit, but Englishmen did not.

As the better days came it was the ambition of old and young women to possess gold beads for the neck. The peddler of those times was the medium to acquire them. His visitations were periodical. A few beads were purchased from time to time, carefully put away until a sufficient number were purchased. Silver spoons were obtained in the same manner. Wooden spoons were in general use, and a few had German silver. The recollections of the Colonial days lived in their memories. For these comforts their hands never ceased to labor until they once more possessed them. Their scanty hoards were carefully treasured, until a dozen teaspoons could be purchased. Rarely was there a purchase of more than one large spoon at a time. Ready money was not much in circulation except in the cities. Barter or exchange was the rule, but the peddler must have cash for his wares. Seldom did a bride have more than a dozen teaspoons, three or four tablespoons, a pair of salt