

IN THE PORCH.

Ah! sweet, in the summer evenings,
When the day's fierce heats are done,
When the stripes and the cares of labor
Have flown with the sinking sun,
Just to sit in the leafy shadows,
With the darkness dropping down:
Till the Night, like a queenly matron,
Sits crowned with her starry crown.

Just changing our gold for silver,
The sun for the placid moon,
When the nights are soft with slumber,
And sweet with the scents of June:
Till our thinking is naught but dreaming,
And, far from all sordid things,
We soar from a world of sorrow
Mid the shimmer of angels' wings.

While the rustle of leaves above us,
Just stirred by the breathing air,
Falls sweet through the solemn silence,
As the whisper of saintly prayers,
But still with a touch of sadness:
Just a dream of the dying day:
Or the sound of a voice, long silent,
From one that has passed away.

When over the jasmine-petals,
And over the woodbine-blossoms,
All the loving airs that linger,
Are laden with sweet perfumes:
Half-drowning the drowsy senses,
Till the grasses, under our feet,
Sigh, breathing the scents of the roses,
And drinking the dews so sweet.

Calm, the Queen of the Night, up yonder,
Looks down through the drowsy air,
As she pines in her lonely splendor,
And envies a world so fair:
So fair with its buds and brightness,
So rich with its golden store,
So great in the grand hereafter,
So proud of the days of yore.

Then give me the golden season—
These nights in the summer's prime—
When the stars are the poet's teachers,
And the world seems wrapped in rhyme!
Sweet, sweet is their still silence,
That speaks to the spirit best;
Still bearing its burden of blessings—
And the boon which it brings is rest.

Ah! fair are the skies above us,
And fair is the earth beneath of roses,
While she gathers her royal wreath:
For the voice of the golden Summer
Floats far through the skies above,
As she sings in her queenly garden—
And the song that she sings is love.

SHARON SPRINGS REVISITED

Nestled among the wood-clad hills of Schoharie county, half-hidden in the close foliage of its luxuriant maples, lies the village of Sharon Springs; nine miles from the railroad on this, the pretty and comfortable side, and more than a mile on the other. This conservative situation, in a "rapid transit" age, may account for its decline in popularity, although our ancient is inclined to refer that to the influx of what he calls "the German element." But whatever it has lost, the hop-fields still flourish, the mineral waters preserve their genuine nauseousness, summer is still cool and brief, the hills are still ablaze with sumach, and the September woods aflame with scarlet and gold.

In the old days, the reputation of the springs for medicinal virtue was far superior to those of Saratoga, so at least its loyal frequenters have ever maintained, and deservedly greater than those of Richfield. They used to call it Bethesda; and many were the sermons preached in the hotel parlors by convalescent and grateful clergymen, who readily adopted the healing waters as the text of their discourse. The mineral springs are various; there are red, blue, white, yellow (and for aught I know, green and purple) sulphur; sulphur-magnesia; and chalybeate; two of this latter, a weather-beaten and much-whittled pavilion on a hillside on the verge of the woods, and a tiny iron spout projecting from a rock beside the road above the old mill, the water of which was once remarkably strong and pure, but has now lost its virtue. The yellow sulphur supplies the baths; the white is most agreeable to drink, or rather least unpalatable; the blue is recommended for weak eyes. The ancient, whose sight has been notably good all his life, always discovers a necessity, during a sojourn in Sharon, for a dash of blue sulphur water over the eyes, whenever he passes the spring. In fact, faithful habitués used to imbibe sulphur and magnesia and iron in incredible quantities, and expend untold dollars in morning baths and untold hours in subsequent naps, from sheer force of habit, while in excellent health. The taste, to strangers inexpressibly nauseous, is, to us who are, as one may say, brought up to it, rather piquant and pleasant. The results of the chemical analysis of the different springs may be found in printed form on all hotel and boarding-house tables. The list contains many names one does not like to think of swallowing, but if discovered after the deed is done, it implants in the breast a consciousness of heroism.

Most of the hotels are built on the main street, the widest and shadiest and loveliest of maple-lined avenues, which runs along the valley. From it pretty side streets, double-arched with younger maples, run steeply up the hills. The village is more charming in detail than it is as a whole. To know it, you must follow up one of the same maple archways. Take this one, for example. We pass the old school-house wherein years ago we heard a sermon from George Washington, the clerical head-waiter, well-known to old sojourners here, and go on up the steep plank walk past the square boxes called houses, externally diminutive but internally capacious, from the piazzas of which idle boarders survey us indolently. By the

roadside, in the rich grass blooms a profusion of wild flowers, daisy and buttercup and dandelion, St. John's wort and wild turnip and wild lady's slipper and milkweed, and harvests of golden-rod in its season; and daintiest of all, the slender larkspur, peeping up from under the edge of the planks or leaning from a cranny at the base of a garden wall. Everything wild has here a ripe luxuriance, the bloom is larger and richer, and the growth stronger and freer than elsewhere. In the gardens—more splendid far than the roses and geraniums and pansies—mounted on tall straight stalks, cluster the great heavy blossoms of hollyhocks such as flourish in no less favored spots; fine in texture, royal in size, fresh and delicate in color, a prize for the belt of the city-bred beauty who strolls to the spring in the cool afternoon.

Our walk has brought us, somewhat breathless and slow toward the last, to the summit of the highest hill to the sunrising; a hill-top commanding the town and the surrounding country for miles and miles. Here is perched the little church with its rectory, both built of handsome dark gray native stone. Whatever changes we are to find, these are unchanged. The church has a steep, pointed roof, and a tiny bell-tower at the side, half stone, half open beam-work. Heavy vines drape the walls and smother the wee, narrow windows. A slender creeper with red leaves strays around the chimney. The smooth little lawn slopes, with a finishing terrace, down to the back porch of the charming, vine-clad rectory. Each side of this gem of a cottage shows two gables, under which look out small neat windows, with closed blinds, for it is at present unoccupied. Vines straggle all over, and mantle the one tiny bay-window. A veranda runs half across the front, facing six feet square of garden ground, level with the top of the wide stone wall along the street. It is very pretty, and very tiny, and very inconvenient. And the turf is, oh so green! And the view, oh so wide!

Directly opposite to us, along the summit of its own proud hill, the pavilion stretches its ugly length, supplemented by long rows of cottages. A thick avenue of noble trees leads up the hill from the village and circles round the hotel. Its fine broad gallery, a quarter of a mile in length, commands a superb view, over the great valley, and up where the hills climb to the blue tops of the Adirondacks. Above, magnificent clouds roll after and over one another in a vast expanse of sky. A thunder-storm here is grand beyond mortal utterance. Black masses, lightning-reft, hurl each other on; peal chases peal, roar crashes upon roar, rain folds its pall about the height and wraps it in the gloom of a terrible splendor.

The charming side streets branch out from Main street on the eastern side only. The ridge of hills which hides the sun before the summer afternoon is over, making a shady hour or two of light and coolness for promenade or lounging is rugged, and precipitous, and deeply wooded. At the western end of the carriage bridge, which crosses from the northern extremity of Main street, lies a neat little park, embellished with flowering shrubs and well-laid walks, surrounding the temple of the magnesia fountain, and creeping up toward the long vine-hung Italian arbor, which to-day we find desolate and falling to decay, with never a rustic bench to beguile the loiterer of an aimless hour. But up the steep, and to right and left, are the natural woods. An owner's merciful faculty for letting well enough alone, if in some respects carried too far, has yet preserved to us this matchless happy-hunting-ground of childhood and youth. We mount from the sulphur spring by a laborious ascent, ribbed by an irregular staircase of projecting tree-roots to a certain grassy platform, shaded by the wood that overhangs the town. Just here we sat, years ago, and read "The Black Dwarf," reached by all the breezes and shielded from the sunshine. On the bench, in the old days of gayety, usually lounged a handsome Cuban, in an attitude of careless grace, smoking the very best cigars. There were hundreds of them here then, decidedly picturesque in appearance, seldom doing anything more toilsome than posing and smoking; too indolent, it seemed, even to converse or to dance, but adding to the landscape a suggestion of romance. Their absence is a marked feature of the present desolation.

From this spot we can survey almost the entire town; the whole length of the once festive Main street, no longer crowded with carriages from end to end. Directly below us lie the new brick houses of the sulphur baths, which, with the simple shelter over the neighboring spring, are an improvement; but the fire which swept away the hideous old structures and made room for these, destroyed first the best-looking hotel in the village, which rose on the site just beyond. Alas! the gay and splendid dresses on the wide piazzas, and the music and the dances, and the perfect models of summer laziness so freely provided here! Ah, if this were all! We glance along the fine avenue and note the painful prominence of third-class hotels, and you see, close upon the side-walk, a flourishing field of oats, broken by the incursions of the Canada thistle. On this field stood, in olden time, one of the largest hotels, one famed for a select patronage. Here in its earlier days, a religious tone prevailed and clerical anecdotes and laughter enlivened the piazza. In its parlors, to audiences worthy of such repasts, Professor Mitchell lectured on "The Astronomy of the Bible," and Professor Dunn, of Brown University, on "Sacred Poetry." The evenings were spent in historical and other intellectual games, varied by anecdotes of travel and adventure, in

which many men widely known in religious and literary spheres vied one with another, and Professor Goodrich, of Yale, so they tell us, bore off the palm. Later, its aristocracy partook of the fashionable, rather than the ecclesiastical, but it was always select and more distinctively American than the other houses.

Across the avenue from this is the old bowling-alley, wherein, twenty years ago, the dignified, lean giant, Dr. Mc—, played against roly-poly, puffing Dr. K—, witnessed by a large and highly respectable crowd of their parishioners. Dr. Mc—, would select the smallest ball, and with long thin arm downstretched, send it spinning along the middle of the alley into the heart of the wooden phalanx. Dr. K—, on the contrary, chose a missile closely resembling himself in size and form, tottered a short way toward his mark, dropped his thundering charge and had much ado not to follow it. The rivals are in heavenly maunions now, and those who breathlessly watched the contest are scattered far and wide. The alley has assumed a beery aspect; a screen stands within the door, and loungers adorn the steps.

Farther on the eye reaches sadder desolation. Within these blackened foundations the sand is mingled with gray ashes; the agonized swan in the fountain in front raises a gasping, empty beak; a large and rusty coffee-mill is yet erect by the rear wall, while already the court is struggling into the semblance of a kitchen garden. Here what merry days were wasted by with music and laughter! Here what bright eyes glanced, what light feet danced, what hearts were broken or thrown away! What tragedies and comedies were hastily enacted, making or marring lives unnumbered, while we children ran in and out, and enjoyed it all, half understanding! For this was our hotel.

If we should follow the Main street, with feet instead of eyes, as now, we might search in vain for one of the old landmarks. It was a curious garden, now commonplace in appearance, which was in old time profusely decorated with ornaments of an anatomical nature. Ghostly shoulder-blades and shin-bones of oxen and sheep and horses were fantastically disposed upon bushes and prominent boughs; bleached skulls employed by night as lanterns, and occasionally painted with wide red rims about the eye-sockets, or blue and orange splashes according to taste; together with other startling pendants, never to be forgotten if once suddenly encountered.

If we should wander on still, for a mile or so, up this same road, and then turn aside, according to the directions of some wayside farmer, who wonders "why folks will go there, anyhow," we should reach, by and by, the so-called "Devil's Hole." It is one of the ancient wonders of the place, much famed in the days of Sharon's glory. Clambering over the sunken end of a stone wall, one enters the lowest corner of a spacious field, whose very singular and beautiful gently rolling slope reaches at a distance quite an elevation, and terminates in a line of rail fence high against the sky. You follow the course of a dry brook, the bed of which is paved with white limestone and slopes downward as the hill slopes upward, the perpendicular bank running higher, until it is far above the traveller's head; at last this bank curves around, ten feet or more above the path of the stream, and closes, both sides sweeping together in a wide grassy circle, broken only by the entering causeway, while from the utmost verge, on the right, an elm looks loftily down into the unexpected abyss.

You let yourself down from one shelf to another of great limestone slabs and reach the brink of a sort of well, perhaps fifteen feet deep by ten in diameter, wherein deep circular corrugations, as if intended to receive a giant screw, indicate that the shaft has been bored by whirling water. On the wall opposite the entrance, from the lower-most ledge down to the bottom of the well, runs a fissure in the rock, opening to a narrow passage underground. Men who have followed this with ropes and lights report that the passage slants gently for a considerable distance, then makes a plunge of twenty-five feet and continues, how far no one knows, its winding way. They say it turns and runs under the adjacent village of Rockville. They say they have walked through it under the church building a quarter of a mile away. This unfortunately casts discredit on the whole story, as it is not probable that they had the proper instruments for ascertaining their exact location in regard to the upper world. There used to be water in the well but it is now choked with stones, to which every visitor contributes his quota. Very few now-a-days find their way to this strange and picturesque spot, but in old times it was the goal of many a strolling party.

Another favorite walk led up through the very woods on the verge of which we are still forgetfully standing; up under the trees by a declivitous and wandering mossy path, out into the sunny and breezy and lonely hill-country beyond, the haunt of flame-like golden rod and blood-red sumach. A mile or more of wild and fascinating road, bordered by a thick growth of bewildering untamed beauty, seems pitifully short. Suddenly you find yourself on the brink of a deep and wide valley. The spot on which you are standing is ragged and snowy white. It is the old lime kiln, blanched and ruinous and ghastly, but commanding a magnificent prospect of mountain and valley, and a glorious cloudland grander than all; a view far famed, and well worth seeking by a more wearisome tramp, but almost too great a weight of delight and beauty after that long walk of keen and

ever fresh enjoyment. You draw your breath hard and turn away, to accustom yourself to the grandeur and loveliness and then look again. Yet you gaze again and again, and it is hard to leave, and you are sure to return late, flushed and disorderly, and burdened with ferns and flowers.

How well I remember the last time we took that walk, under a shady sky, making the short road shorter with snatches of song and anecdote and merry talk; two of us dropping behind, lured by the wildflowers, many of which I have never found elsewhere, which crowded along the wayside. To-day, how still it is! There is nothing to recall the gay excursions of young men and maidens which filled the wood with music. Only invalids, muffled in heavy shawls, traverse the streets at the time of the morning bath; only children come to hear the band play in the grove in the cool afternoons.

Ichabod! Ichabod! How completely the glory has departed! The perpetual hills are still the same; the beautiful, perfect wood has the old charm; the long avenues of trees, the fields of sumach beyond, the bracing air, are unchanged since our childhood's days. But over all is the shadow of a lost presence; out of the still loveliness the soul has passed away.

Here, where we stand, we can look up into the so-called park, most of it still the wild domain of nature. Oh dear old woods! the glory of a golden sunshine rests on you to-day, and shimmers through a light veil of pale green leafage upon those paths haunted by dead romance; yet even to you also is something lost. At the entrance to your green gloom, the pistol-gallery, erst ringing with shots and merriment, stands a silent wreck. Close beside it, where the grass could not grow for the tread of many feet, the broad target no longer defies the unpracticed archer; no longer the Indian leans calmly on his painted bow, and hands long arrows to the white man, who excited by triumph or by blundering defeat, feels upon him the laughing eyes of a bevy of watering-place nymphs; no longer he challenges "any gentleman" to a trial of skill, with a box of cigars at stake, an offer rarely accepted we fancy, by any but a Cuban planter intent on displaying his recklessness of expenditure; no longer he watches cynically the efforts of the lady archer superintended by her devoted swain; all that is past.

Still in their curtained booths the Indian basket weavers ply their graceful task; but trade is stagnant, and a pretty chipmunk whisking across the path and skurrying into the dead leaves attracts more attention than their dainty wares. The temple over the magnesia fountain is much the same but the spouting lions have grown black in the face, one serpent has lost his central coil, and the classical nonentity which surmounts the monument-like structure has stood on tip-toe so many years that a wooden staff has been provided for her support.

Farther up the steep is the real, untamed woodland, where splendid trees, luxuriant in leaves, cluster thickly, sheltering a marvel of delicate, untangled undergrowth, and in spots we know right well, deep mosses, fine-fronded ferns and slender sprays of maiden hair. Oh, the winding footpaths our childhood loved so well! how they grow familiar as we try to lose ourselves in their mazes! how they reveal to us as of old, their reticent wildness! how they withhold, shyly or slyly, their final purpose, though memory declares these turnings safe and pleasant to follow! How they woo us on by soft shades of tender green or golden fleckings of light by unexpected openings, by the easy rise or the picturesque descent, by the bewildering turn or the promising vista, over deep leaf-carpet through enchanting solitude. And "look," cries one, "here is the group of rocks where we sat that day. Oh, don't you remember it?" And "yes," another calls "this is the old hollow tree, it is living yet." And "Oh!" exclaims a third, "they have taken away all the benches that used to be here." And some merry maid slips into a hollow and sinks into a deep pool of dead leaves, and is pulled out amid peals of laughter; and her neighbor cries out with rapture that "this is, yes it is," the way to the old lime-kiln! and one other is quite silent, musing on lost companionship of those other days.

"O tempo passato!" exclaims the young Fanny Kemble, "the absent may return and the distant be brought near, the dead be raised and in another world rejoin us, but a day that is gone, and all eternity can give us back no single minute of the past."

Some day Sharon Springs may be rediscovered, and the new pioneers of fashion and gayety will loudly express surprise that so great beauty should be so long neglected, and the price of board will go up, and grand hotels will spring from the ashes, and brass bands will wake the forgotten echoes in the hills, and beauty and gallantry will sip the white and blue and yellow sulphur, and the magnesia and the chalybeate water, and set down the glasses with slight, well-bred grimaces, and have their photographs taken on spacious galleries, as their grandfathers did; but that may not be in our time.

LADY BEAUTIFIERS.

Ladies, you cannot make fair skin, rosy cheeks, and sparkling eyes with all the cosmetics of France or beautifiers of the world, while in poor health, and nothing will give you such rich blood, good health, strength and beauty as Hop Bitters. A trial is certain proof.