

## Sarah Josepha's Cranberries.

(By Sophie Swett, in 'The Christian Endeavor World'.)

Martha walked along the turnpike road, with the key of the Half-penny Cove school-house dangling from her belt. She always locked the school-house door with a sigh of relief, and she was glad now that the term ended in three days, although after that there was only the stocking factory to look forward to.

She hated school-teaching—at least, at Half-penny Cove, where the number of scholars varied from twelve to twenty, and the salary was only four dollars a week. If she could have taught school up at Rockton and got six hundred dollars a year, like her cousin, Sarah Josepha, that would have been different.

Sarah Josepha had had 'advantages'; she had been sent away to school, and had taken music lessons. Her uncle Joseph had paid the expenses. He was Martha's uncle as well, but he had never done anything for her. The ostensible reason for his partiality to Sarah Josepha was that she was his namesake, and her mother was a widow. Martha's mother, who was his sister also, might as well have been a widow, as Martha said to herself bitterly; for she had married the sort of man who has no luck. He sat in the store and enlightened his townsmen upon the proper way of managing the country politically, while his wife tried to support the family by taking work from the stocking factory. She was a bitter little woman, embittered by unavailing energy and thwarted ambition; by 'trying to make Cyrus spunk up,' as she tersely put it. So it was not a wholesome atmosphere in which Martha had been brought up.

Some people said that Uncle Joseph had not liked Martha, because she looked like her father. Uncle Joseph was a man who declared that he believed in 'stiddy days' works, rather than in luck, and told his political brother-in-law that it was as much as he could do to sail the 'Sarah Jane,' his tidy little coaster, without attending to the ship of state.

Uncle Joseph had sailed now on the silent voyage; the 'Sarah Jane' lay, a bleaching hulk, at Dawn Point; and he had left his great cranberry meadow to Sarah Josepha. Of course, to Sarah Josepha!

Martha could see from the turnpike road the broad meadow stretching away under the afternoon sun. The cranberries were ripe; the picking would begin next week; there was a great crop. The schools would have a vacation for the two weeks of the cranberry-picking. Cranberries must be picked, though learning languished!

Martha meant to pick; it was more profitable work than teaching the Half-penny Cove school, and a very good opportunity for one's vacation. But she would not pick Sarah Josepha's cranberries. Saul Nickerson, who was Sarah Josepha's cousin on her mother's side, and took care of her meadow when she was away, had asked Martha to pick there, but she had refused flatly. She had engaged to go almost over to Tooraloo to pick for Ansel Baker.

Last year that meadow had been Uncle Joseph's and she had picked there, receiving the same wages as the other pickers.

Sarah Josepha had not picked cranberries since she was a child. Her mother has never allowed her to do housework, either, and her hands were as white and soft as a fine lady's. As she thought of these things,

Martha glanced at her own hand, which rested upon the railing of the bridge, where she had stopped to look down at the cranberry meadow. It was rough and toil-hardened. Martha had a swarthy skin, and her figure was what was called 'stubby' at Briscoe Bay. Sarah Josepha was tall and slender and fair, and her hair was as yellow as her hands were white. Orrin Seabrook, who had once taught the winter school, had written a poem about her that was published in 'The Patriot.' The winter schoolmasters usually boarded at Martha's house, but none of them had ever written a poem about her. She would not have cared to have any of them do so, except Orrin Seabrook. He had told her that she ought to be very proud to be Sarah Josepha's cousin.

It had been a windy late September day,

light in his old schooner the 'Rocket.' Saul was always sure to have the first chance at a great catch, and was likely to forget everything else when fish were plenty. Cyril Gates's lame son could take care of his meadow, on the south shore, and the Babson boys, although they were small, could manage to flood theirs; and around the Point the meadows were so sheltered that the frost might not touch them. But Sarah Josepha's meadow was by itself, in an exposed situation. If the frost came, who would flood that?

Martha walked on quickly, her pulses thrilling with a vague mixture of emotions. The wind clouds had converged into a dark line on the horizon, which seemed to be rapidly changing into the dark green of the sea. Above it the sky was a pale, steely blue.



'SARAH JOSEPHA'S CRANBERRIES WERE SAVED.

but now the heavy black clouds seemed to be scattering into little puffballs and drifting out to sea. There was only a light and wandering wind, but it held a hint of coming winter—a sudden hint; for the weather had been warm for the season.

Martha suddenly raised her eyes and studied the sky. At Briscoe Bay, as at most places where the chief part of the population goes down to the sea in ships, even the women and children were skilled to read the weather signs.

'If the wind goes down altogether, there will be a frost!' she said to herself.

A frost meant dire disaster to the cranberries. The great meadows had gates,—small sluiceways, which could be opened; and flooding saved the cranberries from ruin.

The news of a great school of belated mackerel down below the Reach had drawn almost all the men away from Briscoe Bay that morning. Mackerel were scarce and high, and the weather was so mild that no one had thought that immediate danger threatened the cranberries.

Saul Nickerson had gone off before day-

The sun's rays seemed feeble, but Martha said to herself that it was warmer now that the wind was going down, and she was glad. It would be a pity that people should lose their cranberries.

Mylon Pote was ahead of her in the road, reading as he slouched along. Mylon's ordinary gait was a slouch, he was so ungainly, and he always had his eyes upon the ground or upon a book. He taught the winter school; but the girls made fun of him, and the boys played tricks upon him. He was only twenty, and he was one of themselves, for he had been brought up over on the north shore. He was working his way through college, and studied diligently in his leisure time. He was utterly unsocial, and the midnight oil burned every night in the ell chamber at Martha's home. He had chosen that room because it was remote and quiet, and overlooked the sea.

The Babson boys and Sylvanus Atwood were walking on the other side of the road, and much gleeful privacy was being exchanged between them, with side glances at the schoolmaster. It occurred to Martha