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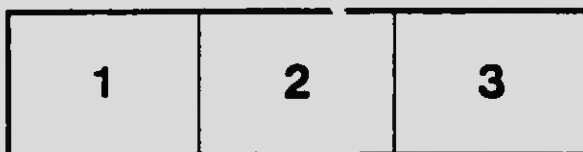
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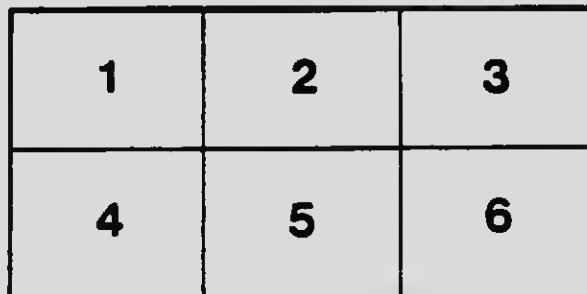
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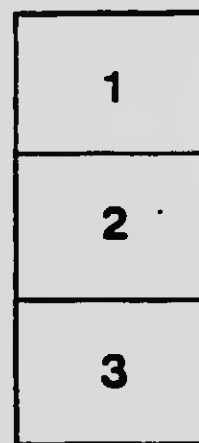
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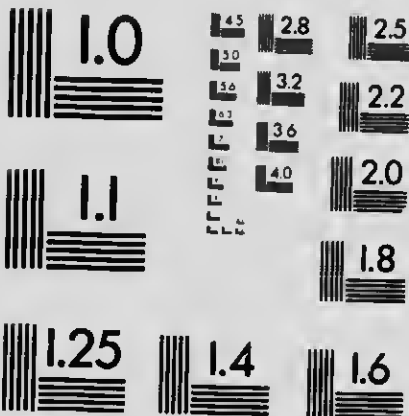
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The Voice
of ...
The River

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The Voice of the River.



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MISSISSQUI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
1906.

"Combien j'ai douce soavenance
Da joli de ma naissance!

Mon pays sera mes amours
Toujours."

CHATEAUBRIAND.



SILVER LAKE.



The River sets out for Canada.



(The River wanders into West Berkshire, Vt.)

THE RIVER.

Rivers, like other features of the landscape, leave their own impress upon the conceptions of the people associated with them; imparting to them either an ideal of circumscribed and playful domesticity, or of adventure and broad and far-reaching gravity, as the case may be—shallow and contracted, or deep and expansive.

A small stream issues from Silver Lake, a placid sheet of water



(Selby Lake.)

in Northern Vermont; and with a proclivity entirely its own, comes stealing across "the line," winding between the hills as if to elude pursuers. Then it makes a dash for the fertile lands of Missisquoi in the Richelieu Valley.

Little Lake Brook hurries down from Selby Lake, among the hills of Dunham, to meet it. The two embrace and calmly and reflectively saunter along as one.

By the avarice of man, the river is soon captured, however, and set to work; and with the blunt directness of our English speech, it



(LAKE BROOK.)

is named Pike River, presumably from the pike that abound in its lower course, where it is more gracefully named by the French Canadians "La Riviere aux Brochets," which fittingly gives the river the foremost place in the imagination.

After it has attained some importance in industrial circles, two other little country cousins, North Branch and Groat's Creek, from the north and south respectively, join "the switz," each, in days



(GROAT'S CREEK.)

gone by, bearing its contribution of flood wood, saw dust and tan bark—evidence of toil.

Even to this day do the bull-frogs up Groat's Creek croak "More rum, More rum," heredity, transmitted from the days of the old distillery. (If they utter that after they reach Bedford—they are shot!

From head to foot, Pike River would measure scarcely more than a dozen miles, as the crow flies. Yet by its wanderings around corn fields, and through thickets and meadows, it seems to be playing truuant, or trying to prove the truth of the old adage: "The longest way around, the safest way home." Or, perhaps, to increase its usefulness, it winds in and out, forming peninsulas, islands, capes and promontories, worthy of nature's kindergarten; until it attains a length of thirty miles or thereabouts before it leaves off its "hide and seek" play and prattle and assumes a gravity befitting the end of its course, where it silently merges into Missisquoi Bay, on the Canadian frontier.



(Where the River empties into Lake Champlain.)

I had just returned home after some months absence selling my "Gold-bearing trees! Two crops of nuggets a year!" and had thrown myself down in the inviting shade of a clump of alders that fringed the grassy bank of the river wherein I used to swim with my cousins, the shiners and tadpoles, for I am related to all creation.

With my head resting on the soft warm turf, I lay like a huge cocoon, in peaceful repose, such as I had not felt since the days of my boyhood when I used to tell the truth. The soothing monotony of sounds—the whispering of the leaves, the ceaseless purling of the stream, with the subdued conversation of the birds, crickets and grasshoppers—all combined, wound me in a web of drowsy forgetfulness.



Mill Pond at Stanbridge East.

All at once I sprang to my feet with defiance in my teeth. A commanding voice, apparently at my very ear, had awakened me with the familiar "Go 'round!" I had spent months going 'round and had come home to rest. I thought it was Sybil, but I beheld only an obstreperous frog. His companions were saying "Chump! Chump!" I had already "chumped."

I winked hard and rubbed my eyes to make sure that the scene before me was not a delusion. Then looking up and down the dwindled stream, I sat down on the bank and fell to musing: "Can this be the river whose breadth and depth had seemed so vast to me before I had travelled?" "Rivers," I said to myself, "seem to have a conscious personality, and like mortals, their seasons of activity, sometimes amounting to violence, succeeded by placidity and even playfulness." Here I smiled, as I asked myself, "Is it the river or Sybil, that dominates my thoughts?"



(Bend in the River at Frelighsburg)

Then my reverie moved on again in unison with the gliding flow of the current; "As the year rolls on, streams that were once of considerable size and co-workers with man, have lost their chief employment through the aggressiveness of science. And like their human counterpart, when superseded by the new, have often dwindled down to insignificance."

"Alas! while we eagerly watch and enjoy the developments of the present, there is still a pang of regret at parting from the old ways with which our loved ones of former days were associated."

"Surely," said I, "among the dwellers in the villages and hamlets strung along this little stream, like precious beads on a chaplet, there must be affinity. In their infancy they were soothed by the same lullaby; in their childhood they bathed and sported in the same waters; in the dreams of youth its nightly serenade has been to them a song of far-off oceans of bliss to which they are hastening. And in the end they desire to slumber within range of the familiar sound of its tranquilizing voice."



(Past happy homes at Riceburg.)

Then a new idea struck me—"Why, this river is historical! Strange, I never thought of it before!"

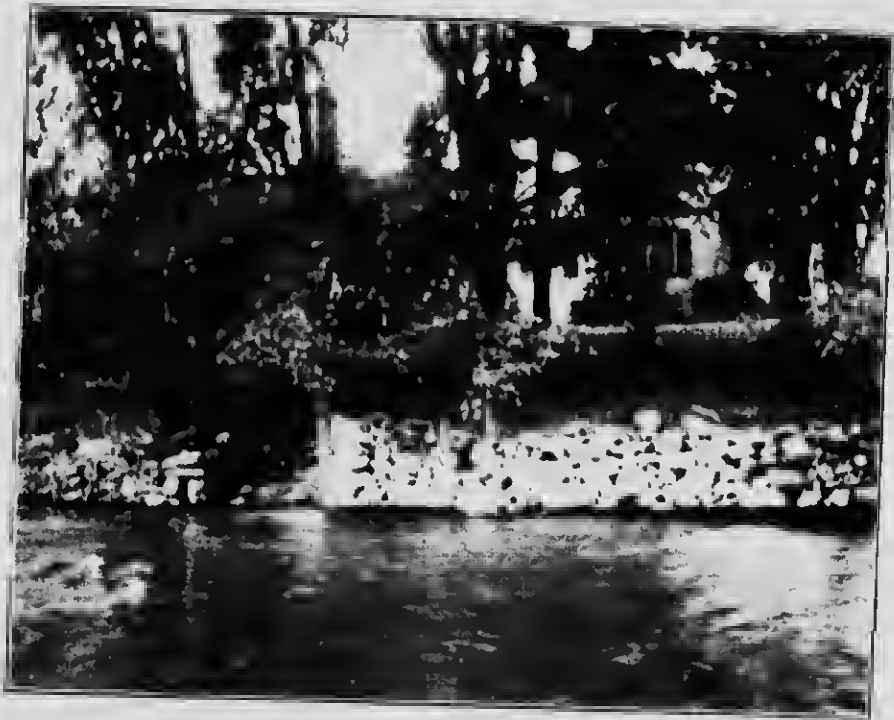
"It has been running ever since—ever since—the Declaration of Independence, when the water of Silver Lake, rose, overflowed its banks and began to drizzle away into Canada—and here it is running yet! And our milk has been watered with it till we are bubbling

today with diluted human kindness—the international ‘alf and ‘alf.”

“This water ought to be bottled before the river runs dry.
Strange, I never thought of it before!”

I was lost in meditation—a mere speck on the face of the seething earth. But my heart was full of the river. Before I knew it, I burst into a love song. But don’t tell Sybil!

There’s a voice that comes to me
In the pauses of the day—
With the morning’s early gleam,
With the twilight’s dusky dream,
And it always seems to say:—
“Free—free?”



(Shady Bank at Stanbridge East.)

Yes, you’re free to do as we—
Run our race where bounds are set,
Well hedged in on every side,
Tho’ we each have our spring-tide—
“Lest the people should forget,”
We’re “free—free!”

You were free to carry me
On your bosom long ago,
With the comrades who now rest
Nestled close beside your breast,
Soothed by your tones that flow
"Free--free!"



(Boating at Stanbridge East.)

You're descended from the "Free!"
Tho' you whisper it to day
Shying round among the hills,
Yet, you're caught to run the mills,
Vainly now you seem to say:—
"Free-e—free!"

For it always seems to me
That your nature is to play—
That your voice is one of pain
While you grind the farmers grain,
Only at the close of day
Are you "free—free."



(Old Mill at Frelighsburg.)



(Attack on the dam at Frelighsburg.)

Droll! how mighty you can be
In the spring when nature's gush
All comes pouring in your path!
Swollen with rage and foaming wrath,
Then you rise and make a rush
To be "free - free."

Anxiously we run to see
You attack the opposing dam,
Kick the bridge and knock the mill;
Roaring then, you snatch a sill,
Plunging on with reckless joy,
To be "free - free."



Chiefly though, we're wont to see
Rippling beauty where you glide
Round the hills and through the plain,
In and out among the grain,
Till you're dancing with lake-tide,
And "free - free."

Half your charm men do not see
'Twas reserved for such as we,
In the pools below the rocks,
There we played in nature's frocks,
And were all so glad to be
"Free—free."



(Mill Pond and Iron Bridge at Frelighsburg.)

Every overhanging tree
Bends a bough to snatch a kiss,
And in every sunny place
Bull-frog comes with blooming face;
By his smile we see 'tis bliss
To be "free--free,"

'Tis a joy indeed to see
Feathered flocks and funny schools,
All within so small embrace,
Tell me, will you? where the place
Where so many in the pools,
And yet, so "free—free?"

You graver grow—and so do we
As we draw nearer to the sea,
Our mirth is scattered far behind,
The echoes floating on the wind,
Retain a part of you and me
That's ever free— free.

Ahem! I declare! The song is almost as long as the river—and as free and as lawless as the spring freshet.

Glad my wife didn't hear it! She would hold me guilty of desecration. Sybil is as much an attribute of the river as are the wild ducks that plunge in its waters, or the willows that fringe its banks. And she rules with the authority of Diana.



(Boating at Bedford.)

Sybil—No, I mean the river—after the last mill on its course is passed, may seem to the casual observer, to have nothing more to offer. But the sportsman and the fisherman find here a happy hunting ground.

It is a favorite resort for ducks and wild geese, while its waters are teeming with choice varieties of lake fish. The mink and the musk rat barrow in its banks.



(Manufacturing Power at Bedford.)

These possessions of the stream can never be supplanted by modern discoveries or inventions. They still exist to the delight of those who love to fling themselves into the open arms of Nature for rest or recreation.

One bright afternoon last spring Sybil and I were driving where the road lies along the river bank near the fishing ground. Laughter and noisy talk of men and boys arrested our attention. The men were seen holding a net against the current, while the boys went farther up the stream and beat with sticks upon the water, driving the fish against the outspread net, which on being dragged to the shore, yielded a bountiful "catch." There were bass, pike, pickerel, suckers and bull-pouts. The little fishes had wriggled through the meshes and escaped.

"There," said I, "That illustrates the law of compensation—the advantage of being of small account in the world." "But," exclaim-

ed Sybil, triumphantly, "You were caught!" "Ah! yes, caught once and am still held in a sliken net," I replied tenderly.

"Now, Hodge, don't! You know I can't bear that sort of palaver."

"There," said I, "see that old hemlock tree at the foot of the rapids? There used to be a wharf there, and sloops came up, a distance of two miles, for cargoes of lumber that they conveyed to Whitehall, thence to various points. This was a busy place in those days. There are the remains of the old saw mill near the dam below the grist mill, do you see? And this road was the stage route from New York and Boston to Montreal. It crossed the covered bridge a little farther up stream, almost in sight from here."



(At the village of Pike River.)

"Don't tell me anything more—I shall have a historic fit. O, dear!" exclaimed Sybil, pretending to fan herself. I whistled "Lanagan's Ball," to soothe her nerves—it used to put the baby to sleep.

Then we watched the sport from our carriage, in the shade of a willow. In the meantime I made a whistle such as I had made in my boyhood up the river. Cutting a basswood shoot, I shortened it to the desired length and cut a ring through the bark which I loosened after repeated efforts. When I had cut an air-hole and a mouth-piece, the instrument was complete. My horse is afraid of the whistle of an engine, and I hoped that this little device would ensure our going home **ACCELERANDO!**

"Sybil" I remarked, "look at that glowing sun-set. It furnishes a golden setting to the animated scene which comprises the beauty of budding life in varied forms. See the scattered elms erect with graceful dignity, and gently nodding to the passing breeze, while the humble alders huddle together in utter helplessness as they are pushed aside and trampled upon. Even the river rushes on as if—

"Oh, pshaw! I don't want to hear any more of your high-falootin' stuff!"

(Sybil is not imaginative.) So I kept still and watched the crows now returned to their summer haunts. They flew back and forth, cawing impatiently, waiting for the fishermen to leave off. Experience had led them to expect a share in the proceeds of the business. Their discerning eyes had now detected a couple of girls who stood lingering by a stump at some distance watching the sport.

Caw! Caw! Presently half a dozen crows settled on a tree near by; then hopped from limb to limb, perking their heads at the girls as if to get a better view of the spring styles in feathers.

And away flew Sybil. While she was making the acquaintance of the girls a chorus of tree-toads of numbers innumerable, set up a jubilation that filled all space, though not a toad was seen, nor a word uttered. But I understood it, and clothed it in our own language for the Historical Society, for is not their "Jubilate" older than the memory of man?

Deep hidden in the grass and sedges,
When winter's cold has ceased,
We humble frogs on the outer edges,
'Mong guests at the vernal feast,

Trill forth our innate sweet devotion
To nature and to kin,
In joyous silvery commotion—
A tintin ab loas din.
Our mingled notes from throats unnumbered,
Along the brooklets ring,
Awakening life that long has slumbered
With the ecstasy of spring!

A distant wood-pecker marked the time with his "Rat-tat-tat."
Through the exultant song ran ever the voice of the river in
clear and liquid monotone.



TO THE PINNACLE.

(MISSISQUOI COUNTY.)



(Distant view of Frelighsburg.)

The days may dawn and suns may set,
Till years creep on and we forget
The changeful scenes of life's spring time
But, modest Mount, you stand sublime —
A monument of staid fastness.
The wanderer can scarce suppress
A fond desire to kiss your brow;
His own lights up with fervent glow,
When you advance upon his view,
As if old love you would renew.

In childhood's days we studied you —
Your varied shades from grey to blue.
When you were blue, then we were rose,
If 'neath a cloud you sought repose.
We watched till you invited, to trace
The signs of pleasure on your face,
Wore you a white cap through the day,
We were consoled with in-door play.

You bear a bald spot on your head—
In merry hand by adventure led,
We climbed until we found the place;
And there with glass we still may trace
St. Lawrence's broad majestic flow;
Mount Royal's spires in sunlight glow.



(Summit of the Pinnacle.)

And little Pike whose waters gleam
Among the trees with glinting beam
Like the smile of childhood when 'tis seen
In glimpses through a tangled screen
A wilderness of golden curls,
Through woods and meads the river purls,
Past happy homes and blooming farms,
The land's a ^{parterre} ~~parterre~~ full of charms,
The roads are foot paths seen from here;
The clutups are home steeds far and near,
And you, dear Mount, the sentinel
That stands to see that "all is well."

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for acceleranda	read	accelerando
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“ pasture	“	parterre
“ staid fastness	“	steadfastness
“ curles	“	curls
“ averice	“	avarice

