

LETTERS

FROM

THE BACKWOODS

AND THE

ADIRONDAC.

BY

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J. V. Headley

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LETTERS

FROM

THE BACKWOODS.

LETTER I.

MOUNT TAHAWUS.

—————, *June 18.*

I CAN scarcely believe, as I stand this evening and look around on the forest that girdles me in, and hear naught but the dash of the waterfall at the base of yonder gloomy mountain, or the rapid song of the whippowil as it rings like the notes of a fife through the clear air, that I stood a few days ago in Broadway, and heard only the surge of human life as it swept fiercely by. The change could not be greater if I had been trans-

ferred to another planet. The paved street changed for the mountain slope—the rattle of omnibuses and carriages for the rush of streams and music of wind amid the tree tops—the voices of the passing multitude for the song of birds and chirp of the squirrel. It seems but a day since I stood where the living current rolls strongest, and felt perfectly at home amid the walled houses and packed city; yet now as the trees shake their green awning over my head, and the great luminous stars sparkle in the intensely clear sky that seems to rest its bright arch almost on the tops of the tall hemlocks, New York appears like a past dream. Oh, how quiet nature is! In New York, everything is in a hurry. There is not a man there that walks the streets who seems to be at leisure. Even the horses catch the hurrying spirit; and everything goes tearing along as if the minutes were crowded with great events. But look! See how lazily that tree swings its green top in the wind—how quietly the brook goes talking to itself through the forest—and how leisurely the very clouds swing themselves over the evening heavens! Just

stand here a moment on the edge of this clearing, and listen to the sounds that rise on the evening air. The drowsy tinkle of the cow-bell sinks like long-forgotten music on the heart, while the scream of the night-hawk far up in the heavens seems like a voice from the spirit world. Its dusky form glances now and then on the eye, and then is lost in the far upper regions, while his cry pierces clear and shrill through the gloom, telling where his pinion still floats him onward. The smoke of the clearing wreaths in slow and spiral columns skyward; while the whistle of the woodman, as he shoulders his axe and wends his weary way to his log hut, is the only human sound that disturbs the tranquillity of the scene. And now the twilight deepens over all. The fire of the distant fallow flashes up in the darkness, and the cry of the boding owl comes like a voice of warning on the ear. How, under the influences of such a scene, the heart throws off link after link of its bondage, and the soul loses its sternness and fierce excitement, and becomes subdued as a child's! The man sinks before the early dreamer, and dear associations come

thronging back on the staggering memory like sad angels, and the spirit reaches forth its arms after the good and the true. At least it is so with me; and the presence of nature changes me so that I scarcely know myself. A new class of feelings and emotions is awakened within me—new hopes and new resolutions spring to birth. I think more of that unseen world towards which I am so rapidly borne, and of the mysteries of the life that surrounds me. In New York, life is all practical and outward. *Action, action, action* is the constant cry, and action it is till thought gets frightened away.

Ice-cream saloons—crowds on crowds of promenaders—the rattle of wheels—the ringing of the fire bells, and one continuous roar rising like the sea over all, are the contrasts your city now presents to the scene I have been describing. The night closes over haunts of vice, dens of infamy, the gambling house, and the drunken revel. Behold how peacefully it here shuts down over the forest, where the wild bird has gone to sleep beside its mate, and not a restless unholy spirit is abroad!

And then the morning—how different! The morning in New York is always associated in my mind with markets. Soon as the sun mounts the dusty heavens, New York seems to open its mouth and rush for the markets. But here by the forest, as the unclouded sun wheels with a lordly majestic motion above the mountain, ten thousand birds seem to have awakened at once. I would you could listen a moment. It is a perfect storm of sound. From the soft warble of the robin to the shrill scream of the woodpecker, there is every variety of note, and yet all in accord. I said nature was quiet, and every moving thing at leisure; but I was mistaken. These birds seem to be in a hurry, as if they had not time to utter all their music; and they pour it forth in such rapid, thrilling strains, that the ear is perfectly confused.

Ah! there are other times when nature is not tranquil; for now, while I am writing, a dark shadow has fallen on my paper, and as I look up I see the sun has left the blue sky, and buried his burning forehead in a black thunder cloud that is heaving, gloomy as midnight, over the mountain.

The lightning searches its bosom, as with an assassin's knife, and the deep low growl that follows is like the slow waking up of wrath. The distant tree tops rock two and fro in the gathering blast, and a hush like death is on everything. Still I love it. I love the strong movement of those black masses. They seem conscious of power and of the terror of their frown, as it darkens on the crouching earth. It is black as midnight; but I know before long the sunbeams will burst forth like the smile of God, the birds break out in sudden thanksgiving, and the blue sky kiss the green mountain in delight.

Thus does nature change—yet is ever beautiful in her changes. I did not design, when I commenced this letter, to fill it up with such a diary of my feelings; but the truth is, when I first get into the country, at least into the backwoods, I wish to do nothing for the first two or three days but lie down on the hillside, and look at the trees and sky, and think of the strange contrast between the life I have just left and the one that surrounds me. It takes some time to adjust myself to it—quite a preparation—before I can enter on

that active life of fishing, tramping, and camping out in the woods, which my health demands; and it is but natural you should have my transition state. At least, it is natural I should write out that which is uppermost in me.

I expect soon to start for the Adirondac Mountains, at whose broken terminations I now rest. I have some things to say about Long Lake and Mr. Todd's colony there, which will put your readers right respecting it. You know, two years ago, that Mr. Todd took me up rather sharply in your paper on account of some statements I made respecting that country. I made no reply then; but I will now show that I was not only right in every particular, but that every prediction I then made of the fate of the colony has already proved true.

LETTER II.

LOG DRIVING.

BACKWOODS, *July 6th.*

DID you ever witness a log driving? It is one of the curiosities of the backwoods, where streams are made to subserve the purpose of teams. On the steep mountain side, and along the shores of the brook which in spring time becomes a swollen torrent, tearing madly through the forest, the tall pines and hemlocks are felled in winter and dragged or rolled to the brink of the streams. Here every man marks his own, as he would his sheep, and then rolls them in, when the current is swollen by the rains. The melted snow along the acclivities comes in a perfect sheet of water down, and the streams rise as if by magic to the tops of their banks, and a broad, resistless current

goes sweeping like a live and gloomy thing through the deep forest. The foam-bubbles sparkle on the dark bosom that floats them on, and past the boughs that bend with the stream, and by the precipices that frown sternly down on the tumult. The rapid waters shoot onward like an arrow, or rather a visible spirit on some mysterious errand, seeking the loneliest and most fearful passages the untrodden wild can furnish. I have seen the waves running like mad creatures in mid ocean, and watched with strange feelings the moonlit deep as it gently rose and fell like a human bosom in the still night; but there is something more mysterious and fearful than these in the calm yet lightning-like speed of a deep, dark river, rushing all alone in its might and majesty through the heart of an unbroken forest. You cannot see it till you stand on the brink, and then it seems so utterly regardless of you or the whole world without, hasting sternly on to the accomplishment of some dread purpose!

But such romance as this never enters the head of your backwoodsman. The first question he puts himself, as he thrusts his head through the

branches and looks up and down the current, is —“Is the stream high enough to run logs?” If it is, then fall to work: away go the logs, one after another, down the bank, and down the mountain, with a bound and a groan, splash into the water.

The heavy rains about the first of July had so swollen the stream near which I am *located*, that all thoughts of fishing for several days were abandoned, and the log drivers had it all to themselves. So, strolling through the forest, I soon heard the continuous roar that rose up through the leafy solitudes, and in a few moments stood on a shelving rock, and saw the lark-swift stream before me as it issued from the cavernous green foliage above, and disappeared without a struggle in the same green abyss below. I stood for a long time lost in thought. How much like life was that current in its breathless haste—how like it, too, in its mysterious appearance and departure! It shot on my sight without a token of its birth-place, and vanished without leaving a sign whither it had gone. So comes and goes this mysterious life of ours—this fearful time-stream, sweeping so noiselessly and steadily on. And there where that

bubble dances and swims, now floating, calmly though swiftly, along the surface, and now caught in an eddy, and whirled in endless gyrations round, and now buffeted back by the hard rock against whose side it was cast, is another life symbol. Such am I and such is every man—bubbles on the dread time-stream; now moving calmly over the waters of prosperity—now caught in the eddies of misfortune, till, bewildered and stunned, we are hurled against the rocks of discouragement; yet, ever afloat, and ever borne rapidly on, we are moving from sight to be swallowed up in that vast solitude from whose echoless depths no voice has ever yet returned. Life, life! how solemn and mysterious thou art! I could weep as I lean from this rock and gaze on the dark rushing waters. Thought crowds on thought, and sad memories come sweeping up, and future forebodings mingle in the solemn gathering, and emotions no one has ever yet expressed, and feelings that have struggled since time began for utterance, swell like that swollen water over my heart, and make me inconceivably sad here in the depths of the forest.

How long I might have stood absorbed in this half-dreamy, half-thoughtful mood, I know not, had I not heard a shout below me. Passing down, I soon came to a steep bank, at the base of which several men were tumbling logs into the stream. I watched them for some time, and was struck with the coolness with which one would stand half under a perfect embankment of logs, and hew away to loosen the whole, while another with a handspike kept them back. Once, after a blow, I saw the whole mass start, when "Take care! take care!" burst in such startling tones from my lips, that the cool chopper sprung as if stung by an adder; then, with a laugh at his own foolish fright, stepped back to his place again. The man with the handspike never even turned his head, but with a half grunt, as much as to say "Green horn from the city," held on. It was a really exciting scene—the mad leaping away of those huge logs, and their rapid, arrowy-like movement down the stream. At length I off with my coat, and, laying my gun aside, seized a handspike, and was soon behind a huge log, tugging and lifting away. I was on the top of a high bank, and

when the immense timber gave way, and bounded with a dull sound from rock to rock, till it struck with a splash into the very centre of the current, my sudden shout followed it. As that log struck the water, it buried itself out of sight, and then, as it rose to the surface for a single moment, it stood perfectly still in its place except that it rolled rapidly on its axis—the next moment it yielded to the impetuosity of the current, and darted away as if inherent with life, and moved straight towards a precipice that frowned over the water below. Recoiling from the shock, its head swung off with the stream, and away it shot out of sight.

The stream gets full of these logs, which often catch on some rock or projecting root, and accumulate till a hundred or more will be all tangled and matted together. There they lie, rising and falling on the uneasy current, while a driver slowly and carefully steps from one to another, feeling with his feet and handspike to see where the drag is. When he finds it, he loosens it, perhaps with a single blow, and away the whole rolling tumbling mass moves. Now look out, bold driver; thy footing is not of the most certain kind,

and a wild and angry stream is beneath thee. Yet see how calmly he views the chaos! The least hurry or alarm, and he is lost. But no; he moves without agitation; now balancing himself a moment as the log he steps upon shoots downward, now quickly passing to another as it rolls under him, he is gradually working his way towards the shore. He has almost succeeded in reaching the bank, when the whole floating mass separates so far that he can no longer step from one to another, and, after looking about a moment, he quietly seats himself astraddle of one and darts like a fierce rider down the current. These logs are carried twenty and thirty miles in this way, passing from small streams to larger ones, through lakes and along rivers, and are finally brought up at the wished-for point by stringing poles across the river, which stops their further descent. Several different men have clubbed together to drive the stream, and here they pick out each his own, by the mark he has given it, just as you have seen farmers, in a confused flock of sheep, select their own, saying ever and anon, "This is mine, cropped

in both ears and slit in the right," &c. When the logs get fastened together on rocks, &c., it is called a "jam." I saw one of these the other day upon a huge mass of rocks, over which the water never flows except in the highest freshet; and I should think there were four or five thousand of them there thrown into all shapes and attitudes—the most chaotic-looking mass you ever beheld.

This "driving the river," as it is called, is one of the chief employments of your backwoodsman in spring time, and it is curious to see what an object of interest the river becomes. Its rise and fall are the chief topics of conversation. So goes the world. New York has its objects of interest—the country village *its*—and the settler on the frontier his; each filled with the same anxieties, hopes, fears, and wishes—overcome by the same discouragements and misfortunes, and working out the same fate;—man still with that mysterious soul and restless heart of his, greater than a king, and immortal as an angel, yet absorbed with straws and maddened or thrown into raptures by a little glittering dust.

My next will be from the heart of Hamilton county, and I shall have something to say of Long Lake colony.

LETTER III.

ASCENT OF MOUNT TAHAWUS—DIFFICULTIES OF THE
WAY—GLORIOUS PROSPECT FROM THE TOP.

I HAD finally resolved to ascend this mountain, the highest in the Empire State, and the highest in the Union with the exception of Mount Washington. The hunter Cheney told me that not a human foot had pressed its lordly summit for six years, and that it would require three days to ascend it and return. It was fifteen miles to the top, through a pathless wilderness, across rivers and amid tangled thickets, and over swamps that would task the powers of the strongest man. As he looked at my pale visage and slender frame, he intimated that I could not accomplish the ascent. I told him I could, and what was more, I could do it all in a day and a half, passing only one night in the woods instead of two. He said

it was impossible ; that it had never been done but once in that time, and then it was performed by himself and another man from necessity, and that he did not get over it for a week after.

Notwithstanding these discouragements, our little party concluded to start ; and so, on Friday morning, before the leaves had shaken the dew from their fingers, we stretched off in Indian file, Cheney the hunter leading. With a hatchet in his hand, and a pack filled with pork and venison and bread on his back, he appeared a fit leader for such a vagabond-looking company as we were. Next came B——n, carrying a tea-kettle in his hand, while I followed close after, with a long stick in my hand to steady me in leaping chasms and climbing precipices, and a green Scotch blanket, rolled up and fastened by a rope around my shoulders, to cover me with at night. The rest came straggling along, each with something in his hand necessary for our dinner or night's lodging in the woods. After moving in this way about six miles, we came to some burnt logs and a rude bier, on which a dead man had lain all night. Mr. Henderson, a wealthy gentleman of

Jersey City, and who owned a portion of the Adirondac Iron Works, had shot himself accidentally with a pistol a short way from this spot, and here he had been brought, to wait for daylight to guide those who bore him through the woods. His little boy, eleven years old, was with him, and "There," said the hunter, pointing to a log, "I sat all night, and held the poor fellow in my arms, until at length he sobbed himself to sleep." A little farther on, we came to a small pond beside which stood a rock where the accident happened. "I stood there," said Cheney, pointing across the pond, "with the little boy by my side, and was busy in preparing a raft on which we might take some trout for supper, when I heard a shot. I looked across, and saw Mr. Henderson flinging his arms rapidly towards heaven, and then across his breast, exclaiming, 'I am shot!' His little son fainted, and fell at my feet. As soon as I could, I hurried to the spot; and found Mr. Henderson sitting on the ground, supported by his friend, and going fast." He committed his soul to his Maker, told his son to be a good boy and give his love to his mother, and in a few minutes

more passed the mystery of mysteries, and entered on the scenes of the boundless hereafter. He was a man of noble character and generous disposition, and loved by all who knew him. It is singular to observe how often men fall victims to that which they most dread and most guard against. Mr. Henderson was nervously afraid of firearms; so much so that he could not see a man passing along the street with a gun on his shoulder, without going out to inquire if it was loaded. He carried the pistol solely as a means of defence in the woods, and in laying it down on a rock, struck the lock while the muzzle was pointed directly towards him. Poor Cheney stood and sighed over the spot, and shook his head mournfully, exclaiming, "Oh, he was a noble man!" It was affecting to witness such deep and lasting feeling in a man who had spent half his life in the woods. You can well imagine that it was with silent and thoughtful steps, and some sad forebodings, we again entered the bosom of the forest.

But I will not enter into the details of this tedious tramp. I cannot make you see the dark spruce forest, with its carpet of moss, and paths

of wild deer and bears trodden hard by their frequent passage from the mountains to the streams; nor induce you to follow with your eye that crooked river that seems, since we last crossed it, to have stolen round and lain in ambush in our path, so suddenly and unexpectedly does it again appear before us. But, after wading it half a dozen times, just stand here a moment on the bank of a new stream, and look through those huge hemlocks into that awful mountain gorge. That lonely sheet of water, spreading there so dark and yet so still, is Lake Colden, and looks, amid those savage and broken hills, like Innocence sleeping on the lap of Wrath. How peaceful and how lonely it seems in its solitude!—and it shall linger in the memory like some half-sad, half-pleasant dream.

From this we struck across to the Opalescent River—so called from the opalescent stones, some of which are very beautiful, that are found in its channel—and followed its rocky bed five miles into the mountains. Now wading across, and now leaping from rock to rock, and again striking out into the thick forest, to get around a

deep gulf or cataract, we pressed on till one o'clock, when we halloosed each other together, and began to prepare for dinner. Some old and shivered trees, which the floods of spring had brought down and lodged against the rocks, served us for fuel. Over the crackling fire we hung our tea-kettle, which we filled from the limpid stream that crept in rivulets around our feet, and, placing some large slices of pork on the ends of sticks which we held in the blaze, soon had our dinner under full headway.

Amid the laughter and freedom inseparable from a life in the woods, we whiled away an hour, then shouldered again our knapsacks and pressed on. The sky, which was clear and beautiful in the morning, had drawn a veil over its face, and the clouds, thickening every moment, gave omen of a stormy night and gloomy day to come. When we set out, we expected to encamp at the base of the main peak over night, and ascend next morning; but I told Cheney we must be on the top before sunset, for in the morning impenetrable clouds might rest upon it, and all our labor be lost. We were weary enough to

halt, and a more forlorn-looking company you never saw than we were, as we straggled like a flock of sheep up the bed of the stream. At length it began to climb the mountain in cata-racts, and we after it. It was now nearly three o'clock, and we had been walking since seven in the morning. Wearied and completely fagged out, it seemed almost impossible to make the ascent. Up, up, at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees—flogged and torn at every step by the long, thorn-like branches of the spruce trees—leaping from rock to rock, or crawling from some cavity into which we had fallen through the treacherous moss, we panted on, striving in vain to get even a sight of the summit that mocked our hard endeavors. One hunter with us several times gave out completely, and we were compelled to stop and wait for him. Crossing now a bear-track, and now coming to a bed where a moose had rested the night before, we at length saw the naked cone, forming the extremest summit of the mountain. There it stood, round, gray, cold, and naked, in the silent heavens. A deep gully lay between us and it, filled with spruce trees

about three feet high, and growing so close together as to form a perfect matting. Through these it was almost impossible to force our way, and indeed, in one instance, I walked a considerable distance on the tops, without touching ground. This difficulty being surmounted, next came the immense cone of rock, bending its awful arch away into the heavens, seemingly conscious of its majesty and grandeur. Up this we were compelled to go, a part of the time, on all fours; but at length, at four o'clock, we stood on the bald crown. The sun, though stooping to the western horizon, seemed near the zenith, and not to move one minute of a degree downward on its path. But how shall I describe the prospect below and around? I have stood on the Alps, and looked off on a sea of peaks, and remained awe-struck amid the majesty and terror around me—feeling as if I were treading on the margin of Jehovah's mantle. But the bright snow-cliffs and flashing glaciers gave life and animation to the scene, while here all was green, dark, and sombre. Those are not peaks around us, but huge misshapen masses, pushing their gigantic proportions

heavenward—now formed of black rock that undulates along the summit like a frozen wave, and now covered with low dark fir trees, that seem like a drapery of mourning over some sleeping or dead monster. All around is wilder than fancy ever painted or described. Scarce a hand's breadth of cultivated land in the whole motionless panorama. There, far, far below, stretching away for miles, is a deep dark lane through the forest, telling where a swift river is sweeping onward, but not a murmur rises up to this still spot, nor a flash of its bright waters escapes from the sullen woods that shut it in. To your left is Mount McIntyre, black as night, and rising from the sea of forest below like some monument of a past world. There, too, is Mount Colden, and further on White Face, with the immense scar on its forehead; and there, and there—but it is vain even to count the summits that seem to have been piled here in some awful hurry of nature. As you thus stand with your face to the south, the whole range of the Green Mountains, from Canada to where they sink into Massachusetts stretches in one grand bold pencil-stroke along

the sky. Far away to the southeast, a storm is raging, and the clouds lift and heave along the dark bosom of the mountain, like the foldings of a vast curtain stirred by the wind. At the base, and losing itself in the distance, spreads away Lake Champlain, with all its green islands on its bosom. From this immense height and distance, the elevated banks disappear, and the whole beautiful sheet appears like water flowing over a flat country. Burlington is a mere toy-shop in the hazy distance. Turning to the west and southwest, you overlook all that primeval wilderness of which Long Lake is the centre; and how grand and gloomy is the scene—an interminable forest, now descending in a bold sweep to the margin of some lake, and now climbing and overstepping the lordly mountain in its progress. Summit overlaps summit, ridge intersects ridge, and all flowing away together, in one wild majestic sea, towards the western horizon. The only relief to this solitude is the lakes that dot the bosom of the forest in every direction. But there is one as far as the eye can reach, which, either from its overshadowed position, or the

natural hue of its water, is black as ink. It looks in its still and dark aspect like the pool of death! But what a tremendous gulf surrounds you, as you thus stand nearly six thousand feet in the air, on this isolated dome! On one side, where the forest comes boldly up to the base, an avalanche of earth has swept, cutting a lane for itself through the strong trees, like the scythe of the mower through the grass.

But just take one more sweep of the eye around the horizon before those clouds which come dashing so like spirits through the gulfs, leaving a night-cap on every summit in their progress, shall obstruct the vision. You take in an area of nearly four hundred miles in circumference just by turning on your heel. Oh, how thought crowds on thought, and emotion struggles with emotion, as you stand and gaze on this scene where the Almighty seems to have wrought with his sublimest power! Cities and kingdoms—the battling of armies—the struggles of the multitude, and the ambition and strifes of men, sink away into insignificance. The troubles of life seem small, and its petty anxieties and cares are all forgotten.

God and nature seem one, and sublimity and power their only attributes. One cannot refrain from asking himself unceasingly, did HIS strong arm heave those mountains on high and lay their deep foundations? Did HIS hand spread this limitless mantle of green below, sprinkle all these lakes around, and fill these vast solitudes with life? Subdued and solemn, the soul whispers the reply to its own inquiries, and involuntarily renders homage to the Infinite One.

But all scenes must end, and we prepared to depart. As I came to the brow of a rock and looked off, I heard a shout below, and there, toiling painfully up, I saw a friend, a young clergyman, who had promised to meet me at Adirondac, but did not arrive till after we left. He was dripping with perspiration; and I took my green blanket, and folding him also in it, walked back over the summit, to give him the view I had been gazing on for an hour. The freezing blast swept with piercing power over us; but, though my teeth were chattering with cold, I enjoyed the mute surprise and awe of my friend as he stood and gazed around him.

At length, approaching night warned us to depart, for we had yet to build us a hut to sleep in, and get our supper before dark, and so we bade the lordly summit good bye, and clattered furiously down its sides.

LETTER IV.

DESCENT FROM MOUNT TAHAWUS.

ON our descent from Mount Tahawus, we began to look eagerly around for a dry spot where we might make our encampment. Cheney, who was at the head of our straggling column, with his axe in his hand, pushed on at a break-neck pace, finally halted, and said that we must stop somewhere immediately, for it was growing dark, and we should not be able to build our shanty or cut fuel for the night. The place he chose was a damp mossy spot, darkly shadowed with fir trees. It was a gloomy-looking place; but we were all too tired to make any objection, and so, in a few minutes, two or three axes were resounding through the forest, and crack! crash! went the trees on every side of us. "Each man must

pick his own bed," said our guide; which meant that every man must cut what boughs he himself wanted. I crawled up from the stream where I had been sitting bathing my feverish hands and face, and went to work. Scattered around, all were busy hacking off fir tree boughs with their knives, while the guides and strong men who accompanied us drew huge trees together for a fire, and put up a shanty. It was voted to place nothing but green boughs over this for a covering from the dew; but the dark and sombre heavens told too well that a storm was at hand, and I insisted that bark should be placed at least over the spot I occupied. They finally covered the whole with bark; and it was well they did, for the rain soon began to come down, and continued to fall the live-long night. But our fire blazed up cheerfully in the gloom; the long trunks were on fire from end to end; while those standing near would now and then shoot up a spiral flame, conspiring to render the scene still more picturesque. One tree, standing close by, threatened to burn off before morning, and I asked the guide if it would not be dangerous to

sleep so near it. He cast his eye up the tall trunk a moment, and coolly replied, as he slashed off a piece of roast venison, that "it would fall *t'other way.*" This was calculating rather closer than I liked, but one soon learns there is no appeal from the decision of a hunter. We presented a singular group as we sat in a semicircle around our blazing fire, each with his morsel on a chip before him. At length, however, we turned in. With a few boughs placed over a green stump just cut, for a pillow, I rolled myself in my blanket, and stretched out before the fire. In a short time, the crackling of the flames and the low steady patter of the rain on the leaves sung me to sleep, and my troubles were forgotten. About midnight, however, I was waked up by an intense heat, and rousing myself, I looked about a moment and laughed long and loud. One poor fellow, who had lain and shivered without anything over him in the damp air, had got up and piled on such a quantity of dry fuel, that it was roasting hot. A row of men lay stretched out before me like pickled herring, and it was inconceivably ludicrous to see them turn and twist in

their sleep to escape the heat. First on one side and then on the other, they kept rolling about, until at length one started up, and looking a moment at the fire, shot like a bolt into the woods. Another and another followed in speechless silence, until the whole shanty was empty of every one but myself. I lay at the extreme end, and hence could safely watch operations.

The morning, the welcome morning, at length came, though with a heavy fog, and we again took up our line of march through the wet woods, and at noon emerged into the little clearing where are stationed the Adirondac Iron Works. "Oh, but weary wights were we"—nearly every man of us, from the hunter down, more dead than alive. I was struck, on this expedition, and indeed on several others, with the kindness of Mr. B——n, a tall, powerful man, with one of those frames of iron which encase a feeling and generous heart. He seemed to take special charge of me, offering continually to ease me of my load, and at night always insisting I should have the best spot in which to sleep. Some of the time I suffered severely in the woods from sickness, and then there

was nothing he would not do for me. I never before received kindness which so won upon me, and the remembrance of which fills me with more grateful feelings.

The next day was the Sabbath, and though eighty or a hundred workmen are congregated here, there is no Sabbath to them except that which the lordly hills have—solemn and majestic, it may be, but with no preacher but nature. We persuaded W——d, tired as he was, to preach; and word was sent round to the few inhabitants. They came together in a little unplastered room, and listened attentively to two certainly most excellent discourses. It was pleasant to keep Sabbath amid the old hills. It was a beautiful day, and deep silence rested on the mountains and forest, and the voice of prayer went up with the great hymn of nature. And oh, how quietly and sadly the Sabbath evening came down on that lonely spot, and how brightly the great stars looked with their luminous eyes over the mountain heights! My heart went back to my friends, and I lay down and dreamed of those I loved.

There was one thing, however, I did not like.

The agent of these iron works, a Scotchman by birth, and his wife, were the only professors of religion in this spot, and yet he charged my friend W——d for keeping him over the Sabbath. If two sermons were not worth a day's board, he cannot value the Gospel very highly. His tax for the support of religious services would be rather small, one would suspect, and it was the least he could do to give the man who had labored for his good and those under him a free house and an open heart. I had much rather he would have added the amount to my bill, for he was a gentlemanly man, and treated us with great kindness.

Some may ask what kind of animals roam these forests. First, there is the moose, the tallest of American wild animals, being found sometimes eight feet high. They are commonly hunted in the spring on snow shoes. The snow usually falls here to the depth of four and five feet; and in the early spring, after a thaw and subsequent frost, a stiff crust is formed which will sustain the hunter on his snow-shoes, while it cuts dreadfully the legs of the moose. Hence they do not travel at this season, but, as the hunters call it, "*yard.*"

That is, one, or two, or three together, will beat down the snow around them in some retired damp place and browse as they beat. Another will take a low hill, covered with those trees producing buds fit to eat, and while the snow is moist begin to travel round and round it, cutting it all up into winding paths. He will not stop to eat: but when the snow becomes frozen, he follows the path he has made, browsing as he goes. When found in this position, he cannot run, for the deep snow and sharp crust are too much for him, and he falls an easy victim to the rifle of the hunter. Deer are frequently killed in the same way, and the woods are full of them. The wolf then has his feast, for his soft spreading paw sustains him as he glides over the crust, while the sharp hoof of the poor deer cuts through at every step, and he is easily overtaken. The bears buried under the snow, or rocks, or roots of trees, sleep out the long winter. Panthers are now and then met, but they are shy of man, and their sinister faces seldom intrude on his march through the forest. Otters and sables are found, and the American eagle here soars in his native freedom, lord of the

mountain crag. Many a savage fight occurs in this wilderness between the hunters and wild animals. A cow moose, with her calf beside her, will fight either dogs or men with desperate ferocity, and a wounded deer will sometimes turn at bay.

The lakes and streams are full of fish—trout of the finest quality; and as long as one keeps by the water-courses, he need not fear starvation. It is impossible, however, to get food on the mountains. There all is still, solemn, and deserted, and one moves amid the gigantic forms of nature as if he were treading on the ruins of a past world. The thunder breaking over their summits is the only sound that disturbs their repose. The river borne in their bosom seems afraid to speak aloud till it has reached the valley below; while the forest folds them in with its drapery of green in majestic silence. The only bold thing there is the wind, which shakes their green crests with a despotic hand, and shouts aloud or whispers low, as suits its own erratic mood.

LETTER V.

THE INDIAN PASS.

THE only object remaining for me to visit, before I returned again to civilized life, was the famous Indian Pass—probably the most remarkable mountain gorge in this country. On Monday morning, a council was called of our party to determine whether we should visit it. A teamster from the settlements had agreed to come for us this day, to take us out the next; but some of our number, fearing his inability to get through the woods in one day, proposed we should abandon all further expeditions, and make our way homeward. But the Indian Pass I was determined to see, even if I remained behind alone, and so we all together started off, some of us still lame from our excursion to Mount Tahawus. It was six

miles through the forest, and we were compelled to march in single file. Now skirting the margin of a beautiful lake, now creeping through thickets, and now stepping daintily across a springing morass, we stretched forward until we at length struck a stream, the bed of which we followed into the bosom of the mountains. We crossed deer paths every few rods, and soon the two hounds our hunter had taken with him parted from us, and their loud deep bay began to ring and echo through the gorge. The instincts with which animals are endowed by their Creator on purpose to make them successful in the chase is one of the most curious things in nature. I watched for a long time the actions of one of these noble hounds. With his nose close to the leaves, he would double backwards and forwards on a track, to see whether it was fresh or not, then abandon it at once if he found it too old. At length, striking a fresh one, he started off; but the next moment, finding he was going back instead of forwards on the track, he wheeled and came dashing past on a furious run, his eyes glaring with excitement. Soon his voice made

the forest ring, and I could imagine the quick start it gave to the deer, quietly grazing, it might have been, a mile away. Lifting its beautiful head a moment, to ascertain if that cry of death was on *his* track, he bounded away in the long chase and bold swim for life. Well, let them pass: the cry grows fainter and fainter, and they, the pursued and pursuer, are but an emblem of what is going on in the civilized world from which I am severed. Life may be divided into two parts—the hunters and the hunted. It is an endless chase, where the timid and the weak constantly fall by the way. The swift racers come and go like shadows on the vision, and the cries of fear and of victory swell on the ear and die away, only to give place to another and another.

Thus musing, I pushed on, until at length we left the bed of the stream, and began to climb amid broken rocks, that were piled in huge chaos up and up as far as the eye could reach. My rifle became such a burden, that I was compelled to leave it against a tree, with a mark near it to determine its locality. I had expected, from paintings I had seen of this Pass, that I was to walk

almost on a level into a huge gap between two mountains, and look up on the precipices that toppled heaven-high above me. But here was a world of rocks, overgrown with trees and moss over and under and between which we were compelled to crawl and dive and work our way with so much exertion and care that the strongest soon began to be exhausted. Caverns opened on every side, and a more hideous, toilsome, break-neck-tramp I never took. There was a stream deep down somewhere, but no foot could follow it, for it was a succession of cascades, with perpendicular walls each side, hemming it in. It was more like climbing a broken and shattered mountain than entering a gorge. At length, however, we came where the fallen rocks had made an open space amid the forest, and spread a fearful ruin in its place. Near by was a huge rock, that, in some former age, had been loosened from its high bed, and hurled with the strength of a falling world, below. It was a precipice of itself, from which to fall would have been certain death. This was "the Church" our guide had spoken of, and it did lift itself there like a huge altar, right in

front of the main precipice, that rose in a naked wall *a thousand feet perpendicular*. The top of this "*church*" could be reached on one side, and thither we clambered and lay down to rest ourselves, while from our very feet rose this awful cliff, that fairly oppressed me with its near and frightful presence. Majestic, solemn, and silent, with the daylight from above pouring all over its dread form, it stood the impersonation of strength and grandeur. I never saw but one precipice that impressed me so, and that was in the Alps, in the Pass of the Grand Scheideck. I lay on my back, filled with strange feelings of the power and majesty of the God who had both framed and rent this mountain asunder. There it stood still and motionless in its grandeur. Far, far away heavenward rose its top, fringed with fir trees that looked, at that immense height, like mere shrubs—and they, too, did not wave, but stood silent and moveless as the rock they crowned. *Any* motion or life would have been a relief—even the tramp of the storm, for there was something fearful in that mysterious, profound silence. How loudly God speaks to the heart when it lies thus

awe-struck and subdued in the presence of his works. In the shadow of such a grand and terrible form, man seems but the plaything of a moment, to be blown away with the first breath.

Persons not accustomed to scenes of this kind would not at first get an adequate impression of the magnitude of the precipice. Everything is on such a gigantic scale—all the proportions so vast, and the mountains so high about it that the real individual greatness is lost sight of. But that wall of a thousand feet perpendicular, with its seams and rents and stooping cliffs, is one of the few things in the world daguerreotyped on my heart. It frowns on my vision in my solitary hours, and with feelings half of sympathy, I think of it standing there in its lonely majesty :

“Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when those lofty rocks,
At night’s approach, bring down th’ unclouded sky
To rest upon the circumambient walls ;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems, choral song, or burst

Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify th' Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here—if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers! Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the cavern'd rocks;
The little rills and waters numberless,
Insensible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams; and often at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of the fabric huge,
One voice—one solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen—perchance above the power of sight—
An iron knell! with echoes from afar,
Faint and still fainter."

I will only add that none of the drawings or paintings I have seen of this Pass give a correct idea of it.

We turned our steps homeward, and reached the Adirondac Iron Works at noon, having traveled twelve miles, a part of the way on our hands and knees. After dinner, it was resolved

to push on and meet our teamster, who, we were afraid, would be compelled to encamp in the forest alone with his team. Getting our guide to row us five miles down Lake Sandford, we bade him good-bye, and, shouldering our knapsacks, started off. I had received a fall in the Pass which stunned me dreadfully, and made every step like driving a nail into my brain. Losing my footing, I had fallen backwards, and gone down head foremost among the rocks—a few feet, either side, and this letter had probably never been written. We expected every moment to meet our teamster, but were disappointed, and thus traveled on until twilight began to gather over the forest, admonishing us to seek a place of rest for the night. We had now gone sixteen miles from the Adirondacs, which, added to the twelve miles to and from the Pass, made a severe day's work of it. Twilight brought us to the Boreas River, and here we found a log shanty which some timber cutters had put up the winter before and deserted in the spring. It was a lonely-looking thing, dilapidated and ruinous, with some straw below, and a few loose boards laid across the logs above. We

kindled a blazing fire outside, and divided our last provisions among us, then sought our repose. As I said, only a few boards were laid across the logs above, leaving the rest of the loft perfectly open. By getting on to a sort of scaffolding, and reaching up to the timbers, we were able to swing ourselves up on the few loose boards that furnished a scanty platform. After I had succeeded in reaching this perch, I helped the others up; but Rev. Mr. W——d was rather too heavy, and, just as he had fairly landed on the boards, one gave way, and down he went. I seized him by the collar, while he, with one hand fastened to my leg and the other grasping the timber, succeeded in arresting his fall, and thus probably saved himself a broken limb. We lay in a row, on our backs, along this frail scaffolding, filling it up from end to end, so that if the outside ones should roll a single foot in their sleep, they would be precipitated below. A more uncomfortable night I never passed, and I lay and watched the chinks in the roof for daylight to appear, till it seemed that morning would never come. I resolved

never again to abandon my couch of leaves for boards and a ruined hut, through which vermin swarmed in such freedom. At length the welcome light broke slowly over the mighty forest, and I turned out. Huge stones and billets of wood hurled on the roof soon brought forth the rest of our companions, and we started off. We had nothing to eat, and seven weary miles were before us before we could obtain a breakfast. The clear morning air could not revive me, and I pushed on, more dead than alive. At length we emerged into a clearing, and there in a log hut sat our teamster, quietly eating his breakfast. The day before, he had started through the forest, but becoming frightened at the wildness and desolateness that increased at every step, he turned back. Hungry, cross, and weary, we sat down to breakfast, and then stowed ourselves away into a lumber wagon, and rode thirty miles to our respective stopping-places. The little settlement seemed like a large village to me, and the inhabitants the most refined people I had ever met. Several days' rest restored me, and

then I began to feel my system rally, and became conscious of strength and vitality to which I had been a stranger for six months.

LETTER VI.

LONG LAKE.

LONG LAKE, *July.*

YOU have heretofore had a good many letters from Long Lake, descriptive of its scenery, capabilities of its land, the interesting colony on its borders, &c. With regard to the scenery, there can be but one opinion—it is unrivaled. Long Lake is one of the most beautiful sheets of water I ever floated over, and its framework of mountains becomes the glorious picture. I never saw a more beautiful island than “Round Island,” as it is called, situated near midway of the lake. As you look at it from above or below, it appears to stand between two promontories, that, with their green and rounded points, are striving to reach it as they push boldly out into the water; while with

its abrupt high banks, from which go up the lofty pine-trees, it looks like a huge green cylinder, sunk there endwise in the waves. I wish I owned that island. It would be pleasant to be possessor of so much beauty. I said once, through your paper, that this never could be a good farming country, in the common acceptation of that term; and I was asked if I had seen this, and that, and the other lake. I now repeat my former assertion, and say, as then, that this might become a good wool-growing region, or dairy country, but nothing more. It is, in the first place, the most mountainous portion of this State; indeed, I do not believe there is in the Union a territory three hundred miles in circumference so terribly rough and wild as this. It is not only mountainous, but has the disadvantage of being the source of nearly all the waters of northern and eastern New York, and hence has less alluvial soil than equally rough districts lying along large rivers. All mountainous regions have more or less interval land, with a rich, deep soil; but here the intervals are *lakes*. Water occupies the place ordinarily appropriated to towns and meadows. There is good land here,

no doubt, and large tracts which are arable, and would be fruitful; but the question is, what proportion does this bear to that which cannot be cultivated? I have seen fields of waving grain in the vale of Chamouni, and thousands of cattle grazing in rich pastures in Grindelwald, and long stretches of meadow in the valley of Meyringen; but it would be ridiculous to call the Alpine district a good farming country, for all that. I venture to say that there are three hundred acres in this region a plough will never touch, to one that it will. Besides, it is a cold climate here, and the summers are short. Neither corn nor wheat can be relied on as a crop. Grass, rye, oats, and potatoes may be grown, and these are all.

Now here is a colony, called the Long Lake Colony, about which much has been said, much sympathy excited, and on which more or less money has been expended. And what is its condition? It has been established for many years, and by this time it ought to furnish some inducements to the farmer who would locate here, nearly fifty miles from a post-office or store, and half that distance from a good mill. But what is the

truth respecting it? *Not a man here supports himself from his farm*; and I can see no gain since I was here two years ago. Some of the best men have left, and those that remain depend on the money (some seven hundred dollars) furnished by the State for the making of roads, to buy their provisions with. The church which was organized some time since was never worthy of the name of one; the few men who composed it, with some few exceptions, being anything but religious men. I was told by one of the chief men here that one man now constituted the entire "Congregational Church of Long Lake." There are no meetings held on the Sabbath, not even a Sabbath school. As I went from house to house, I saw books scattered round belonging to the Long Lake Library, marked, some of them, with the names of the donors; but they seemed to me thrown away. The truth is, the people here, as a general thing, would not give a farthing for any religious privileges, indeed would rather be without them; and instead of this colony being a centre from which shall radiate an immense population, covering the whole of this wild region, it

will drag on a miserable existence, composed, two-thirds of it, by those who had rather hunt than work. I do not mean to disparage this central region of New York; but I would divest it of the romance of dreamers, and the falsehoods of land speculators. If settlers could have picked out their own farms at Long Lake, and clustered around the lower extremity, they might have done well; but these lands, which are tolerably fair, speculators have retained, selling the poorer portions at a low price to tempt buyers. It is in contemplation to drive a rail-road through this entire region, reaching from Lake Champlain to Bonville near Rome. This, though ruinous to the stockholders, would be of great advantage to the land, by bringing whatever it could produce near market. I would like to see this desolate country settled; but it never will be till the west is all occupied. An overplus population will subdue it, nothing else. *Crowding* may drive farmers here, but no gentler means. Say what men will, it is an awfully rough, cold, and forbidding country to the farmer. The Swiss from the Alps, or the Scotch from the Highlands, might pitch their

abodes here, and stay—necessity alone will keep the rest; and when this forest-covered territory shall “*support a million of people,*” the State of New York will show a census equal to that of the whole Union at present. As I have said, I would not discourage a single man from doing his part towards subduing this region; but I would that every one should know precisely what he has to expect. Still I should not have made these remarks, had not some statements of mine been contradicted, and I often been questioned as to their truth. Many have wondered that I did not maintain what I asserted; but I chose rather to defer it till I again visited Long Lake. And now, when I see no missionary here, no church, no meetings on the Sabbath, and no prayer-meetings—not even a school, and many of the best men gone, and the wilderness no more encroached on than before—I feel that my former conclusions were sound, and my predictions true.

Notwithstanding the forbidding aspect things present, I believe, as I have always said, that this might be made a tolerable dairy country. It may be too cold for sheep; but if not, wool enough

might be grown here to supply the world. It needs enterprising settlers—men who go to build their fortunes, not to save themselves from starvation; who take pride in cultivating society, and have some ambition to establish schools and churches. The truth is, this land should never have gone out of the hands of government into those of speculators, who seek their own interests entirely in the way they dispose of it. Had it been left open for every man to choose a portion from, the best would have been taken first, and the poorer soil been gradually encroached upon by the increase of population around flourishing settlements. Now the *worst* is first occupied, because first placed in the market at a reasonable price, and it will not support the buyer. He who comes into this region must expect to work hard with little recompense, see a rough stony farm reject his labor, and make up by economy what he lacks by acquirement.

Still, this is a glorious region to the hunter after the picturesque and grand in nature. I know nothing equal to it this side of the Alps. These lofty mountains, folding their summits so calmly

and solemnly away against the sky—these beautiful lakes in their green inclosures sparkling in the sun—these countless islands and winding rivers make it a land of beauty and sublimity, that once seen is ever after remembered. Still, much of its interest is owing to its very wildness. The shores of these lakes look beautiful because a mantle of foliage sweeps down to the very margin of the waters; but where they are cultivated, rocks and stones present a sterile aspect to the beholder. Cut down the trees, and two-thirds of all the beauty of this region would depart. There would be no sloping shores, carrying the rich meadow or waving grain to the water's edge, as on the Cayuga and Skaneateles Lakes, but in their place abrupt banks, covered with rocks that no cultivation could cover.

But it is with singular feeling one fresh from the city stands here and looks around on the interminable forests, and remembers that it is a hard day's work to get out to civilized life, and yet that his feet are on the soil of New York, and a few roods of ground divide him from the waters of the Hudson. It is no small job to get here,

and to one not accustomed to the woods it is absolutely frightful. Several companies from New York, after penetrating half-way into the forest, have become alarmed and disheartened, and turned back, and I am not surprised at it. A young man with me, brought up in the country, but along the Cayuga Lake, could not refrain from expressions almost of alarm. "How savage!" he would say; "it is really horrible, day after day, and nothing but woods." And how solemn it is to move all day through a majestic colonnade of trees, and feel that you are in a boundless cathedral whose organ notes swell and die away with the passing wind like some grand requiem. Still more exciting is it to lie at midnight by your camp-fire, and watch the moon sailing up amid the trees, or listen to the cry of the loon, wild and lonely, on the wild and lonely lake, or the hoot of the owl in the deep recesses of the forest.

LETTER VII.

TROUT FISHING—MITCHELL.

LONG LAKE, *July 10.*

I SPOKE in my last of the farming capabilities around Long Lake, and of the colony there, which seem to be about on a par—neither being very great or very enticing. My remarks, however, did not refer to the land beyond Long Lake on the farther slopes as they stretch to the Black River country. This region I have but slightly visited, and am told it is more level and fertile than that portion I have been describing. Professor F. Benedict, of Vermont University, has gone over this entire section of the State, and he tells me the land is very different around Raquet Lake, and so on West. His knowledge of the country is extensive, and he has made the most correct surveys of its great chain of lakes ever

executed—better even than that contained in the geological report of the State.

But my mind was soon off the land and on the scenery. I did not come here to speculate in town lots, to found a colony, or subserve the interests of landowners. Being after health, I sought the fatiguing tramp and coarse fare of the woods. It was a hot day as we emerged from the woods on to the shore of Long Lake, and the sun came down with such scorching power that I marked Friday, July 10th, in my calendar, to see if the temperature was correspondingly high in New York and the settlements. Well, this burning day I rode in a lumber wagon through the woods over roots and rocks seven miles, walked seven miles, and rowed a boat eleven miles—a good day's work for an invalid fresh from the doctor's hands. Along the road you would see trees at certain intervals, marked H, which, after vainly attempting to account for, I finally inquired the reason of. "Oh, it means *Highway*," was the reply. This rather comical way, however, of informing one he was on the highway, is not, after all, or rather was not, without its use. When the

first rude path was cut, a man would not have deemed himself on a public road if he had not been told of it in some way. As we passed along, we would come upon fires built over a huge rock in the middle of the track, compelling us to take a semicircle in the woods. On inquiring the cause of this to me singular procedure, I was told that men were working on the road, and in the absence of drills, took this method of breaking the rocks to pieces. Being sandstone, the fire slowly crumbled them apart, so that the crowbar or handspike could remove them. I thought of Hannibal, and his fire and vinegar on the rocks of the San Bernard pass, and men seemed going back to their primitive state. Instead of cutting down the trees that stood in the way, they hewed off the roots, and then hitching a rope to the tops, pulled them over with oxen. And thus they work and toil away here in the depths of the forest, all heedless of the great world without. How strange it seems, to behold men thus occupied, living contentedly, fifty miles from a post-office or village, and hear their inquiries about the war with Mexico, asking of events that had been quite forgotten in New

York! They have their ambition, but its object is a few acres of well-cultivated land, or the reputation of a good hunter; and they have their troubles, but they are born and die in the bosom of the forest. Men toiling for a bare subsistence, for the coarsest fare, poorest dwellings, and meagre comforts of civilized life, always set me musing, and this veiled life of ours grows still more mysterious, and man, god-like, immortal man, strangely like a mere animal.

But on the broad lake, before a brisk breeze, and bending to my oars, these thoughts soon left me. The tiny waves rocked our cockle-shell of a boat like a plaything amid the bubbles, while a bush I had erected in the centre made it fairly foam through the water as the swift blast came down through the mountain gorges. Far away to the southwest, the golden sky shone glorious, and over its illuminated depths the fragmentary clouds went trooping as if joyous with life, while to the northwest, towards which our frail craft was driving, the heavens were black as midnight, and the retiring storm-cloud looked dark and fierce as wrath, retreating, though still uncon-

quered. The sun was hastening to the ridge of the sky-seeking mountains, and his departing beams threw in still deeper contrast the under side of the clouds. But still the waves kept dancing in the light, as if determined not to be frowned out of their frolic, and it was with no little pleasure I watched the awful-looking mass that covered the northern heavens yield to the glorious, balmy, yet swift careering breeze that came sweeping the heart of the lake. I was after Mitchell, the Indian, whom I had formerly taken with me, and who, I was told, was on a fishing excursion, with his father and sister and some others, in Cold River. At length, just as we were glancing away from the head of a beautiful island, I saw a boat coming towards us impelled against the wind by the steady strokes of a powerful rower. As it shot near, I beheld the swarthy and benevolent face of Mitchell. He lay on his oars scarcely a minute to hear my salutation, and my proposition, when he pointed to a deep bay a mile distant, around which stretched a white line of sand, and again bent to his oars. I followed after, for I knew there was

his camp, and soon after our boats grated on the smooth beach, and we were sitting beside a bark shanty and discussing our future plans. But those few barks piled against some poles were not enough to cover us, and soon every one was at work peeling spruce trees or picking hemlock boughs for our couch. The cloudless sun went proudly, nay to me triumphantly, to his royal couch amid the mountain summits, and as twilight it deepened over the wild landscape, our camp-fire shot its cheerful flame heavenward, and we lay scattered around amid the trees in delightful indolence. Already my system began to rally in the presence of nature, and though a miserable invalid, with the bronchitis to boot, I felt that I could lay my head beneath the forest and sleep without a fear.

Mitchell had caught some trout—right noble ones—and those, with the contents of our knapsacks, promised us a noble supper. The trout were rolled in Indian meal, and fried in a little pan we had with us, except a few that were spit-
ted on long sticks, that, with one end stuck in the ground, with the other held their tempting bur-

dens above the smoke and flame. I split off a new fresh chip for a plate on which I spread my delicious trout, with a piece of hot johnny-cake by his side, and, placing my back against a stump, held him with one hand, while my good hunting-knife peeled off his salmon-colored sides in most tempting, delicious morsels. I ate with an appetite and keen relish I had been a stranger to for months, and then asked Mitchell if we could not get a deer before going to bed. He said yes, if the wind went down so that we could float them. This floating deer I will describe in another place, for there was no stirring out to-night. The wrathful little swells came rushing furiously against the unoffending beach, and the tall tree-tops swayed to and fro and sighed in the blast, and our roughly-fanned fire threw its sparks in swift eddies heavenward, and all was wild, solemn, and almost fearful. No boat must leave the beach to-night, and so, carefully loading our rifles and setting them up against the trees, we began to prepare for our night's repose. Some with their heads under the bark shanty, their feet to the fire, others in the open forest, with their heads

across a stick of wood, lay stretched their full lengths upon the earth. I lay down for awhile, but the wind that had increased at the going down of the sun now blew furiously, and *crash* went a tree in the forest, sounding for all the world like the dull report of distant cannon. I could not sleep, and so, rising from my couch of boughs, I went out and sat down on the ground, and looked and listened. The steady roar of the waves on the beach below mingled with the rush of the blast above, while the tall trees rocked and swung on every side, and flung out their long arms into the night, their leafy tresses streaming before them, and groaned on their ancient foundations with a deep and steady sound that filled my heart with emotions at once solemn and fearful. Sometimes I thought one of those gigantic forms must fall in the struggle and crush some of our company into the earth, and then again my soul would bow to the lordly music till that great primeval forest seemed one vast harp, their trunks and branches the mighty wires, and that strong blast the fierce and fearless hand that swept them. Now faint and far in the distance

I could catch the coming anthem, till swelling fuller and clearer in its rapid march, it at length went over me with a roar that was deafening, then died away, like a retiring wave, on the far tree tops. Sometimes my awakened imagination would compare the sound to a troop of horse whose steady tramp, at first low and indistinct, soon shook the earth with its tread, then suddenly and fiercely sweeping by, gradually lost itself in the distance. The steeds of the air *were* out, and their successive squadrons, as they went trampling over the bending tree tops, made the forest tremble. God seemed near, there in the solitude and night, and his voice seemed speaking to me. How calm the sleepers around me lay in the firelight, reposing as quietly amid this wild uproar as if naught but the dews were gently distilling, and yet how helpless they seemed in their slumbers! God alone was their keeper, and I never felt more deeply the protection of that parental hand than here at midnight.

The moon at length arose on the darkness, and the wind lulled gradually into silence. I threw myself on the ground, and watched the

bright orb as it slowly mounted the heavens, till finally weariness prevailed, and I slept. The crack of a rifle startled me from my repose before an hour had passed by, and I sprang to my feet. That was a rude waking to one not accustomed to a hunter's life, but nothing but a poor rabbit had suffered. One of the young men had shot him as he was stealing around the camp fire, attracted by the food we had left scattered about.

The welcome morning at length came, and a little after daylight we were afloat, steering for Cold River, in order to take some trout for breakfast.

LETTER VIII.

TROUTING—A DUCK PROTECTING HER YOUNG BY
STRATAGEM—SABBATH IN THE FOREST.

THE morning broke clear and beautiful over our encampment, and two boats of us started for Cold River to take some trout for breakfast. The Indian and myself went ahead, hoping to surprise some deer feeding in the marshes, but were disappointed. Reaching the foot of the lake, we shot noiselessly down the Rackett River, till we came to a huge rock that rose out of the bed of the stream, when we turned off and began to ascend Cold River. This latter stream, for some distance, sends a noiseless current over a smooth and pebbly bed, while the water is almost as clear as the air above you. Everything on the bottom is as visible as if it were on the shores; and when the sun is up, it is impossible to take a trout,

though the stream is full of them. When we reached it, the surface was covered with foam bubbles, made by the constant springing of the trout after flies. They had absolutely churned it up, and for a while our hooks brought them to the surface fast; but we were too late. The sun, rising over the forest, shed such a flood of light on the water, and indeed *through* it, to the very bottom, that scarcely a fish could be coaxed from his hiding-place. Our boats and ourselves threw strong shadows on the water, sufficient to frighten less wary fish than trout. We, however, took enough for breakfast, and started for home. By the way, is it not a little singular that fish should eat their own flesh? The first one we caught served as bait for the others.

As we were returning, Mitchell left the main stream and entered a narrow and shallow channel, that, by making a circuitous route, reached the lake close beside the river. Passing silently along, we roused up a brood of ducks among the reeds. The mother first took the alarm, and, seeing at a glance that she could not escape with her young, left them and fluttered out directly ahead of our

boat. She then began to make a terrible ado, striking her wings on the water, and screaming, and darting backwards and forwards, as if dreadfully wounded and could be easily picked up with a little effort. I instinctively raised my rifle to my shoulder; then, thinking the shot might frighten the deer we were after, I turned to Mitchell and inquired if I should fire. "I guess I wouldn't," he replied; "she has young ones." My gun dropped in a moment. I stood rebuked, not only by my own feelings, but by the Indian with me. I was shocked that this hunter, who had lived for so many years on the spoils of the forest, should teach me tenderness of feeling. That mother's voice found an echo in his heart, and he would not harm one feather of her plumage; nor could the bribe be named that would then have induced me to strike the anxious, affectionate creature. As I watched her thus sacrificing herself to save her young, provoking the death-shot in order to draw attention from them, I wondered how I could for a single moment have wished to destroy her. I leaned over the boat and watched her movements for nearly half a mile. She would keep

just ahead of us, sailing backwards and forwards, now striking her wings on the water, as if struggling with all her strength to fly, yet unable to rise, and now screaming out as if distressed to death at her perilous position, yet cunningly moving off in the mean time, so as to allure us after in order to increase the distance between us and her offspring. While we were near the nest, she swam almost under our bows; but, as we continued to advance, she grew more timorous, as if beginning to think a little more of herself. I could not blame her for this, for she had hitherto kept within reach of certain death if I had chosen to fire. But it was curious to see in what exact proportion her care for herself increased as the danger to her offspring lessened. She would rise and fly some distance, then alight in the water, and wait our approach. If she sailed out of sight a moment, she would wheel and look back, and even swim back, till she saw us following after, when she would move off again. The foolish thing really believed she was outwitting us, and, I have no doubt, had many self-complacent reflections on the ease with which ducks could humbug human

beings. After we had proceeded in this way about half a mile, she rose from the water, and, striking the Rackett River, sped back by a circular sweep to her young. As her form disappeared round a bend of the stream, I could not help murmuring, "Heaven speed thee, anxious mother!" Ah, what a chattering there was amid the reeds when her shadow darkened over the hiding-place, and she folded her wings amid her offspring, and listened with matronly dignity to the story each one had to tell!

All this, however, was speedily forgotten as we emerged on the lake, whose bosom was swept by a strong wind, against which we were compelled to force our tiny skiffs as we pulled for our camp. It was now nine o'clock, and I never waited with so much impatience for a meal as I did for the johnny-cake that was slowly roasting amid the ashes. We had but one pan, and until the cake was done we could not cook our trout, and so, stretched under the shadow of a huge stump, with my chip-plate in my hand, I lay and watched the crackling flames with all the philosophy I could muster. At length everything was ready, and

with a piece of johnny-cake on a chip, and a trout on top of that, I slashed away with an appetite an epicure would give a small fortune to possess. After breakfast, we had no dishes or forks to clean, but, throwing them both away, wiped our knives on a chip, and in a moment were ready for a start. It was Saturday, and the heavens, which had been so clear the night before, now began to gather blackness, and the burdened wind moaned through the forest, or went sobbing over the lake, that was every moment fretting itself into greater excitement, and everything betokened a gloomy and tempestuous day. We were fourteen miles from a human habitation, and I expected that day to have gone thirty miles further into the forest and spent the Sabbath; but the storm that was approaching made the shelter of a log-cabin seem too inviting, and I changed my mind. To row fourteen miles against a head wind and sea was no child's play, and for one I resolved not to do it. So, making a bargain with Mitchell, the Indian, I wrapped my oil-skin cape about me, and laying my rifle across my lap, ensconced myself in the stern of the boat, and made up my mind to

a drencher. The black clouds came rushing over the huge black mountains, and the rain began to fall in torrents. Now hugging the shore to escape the blast, and now sailing under the lee of an island, we crawled along until at length, late in the afternoon, we found ourselves comfortably housed.

The log hut of Mitchell, in which I spent the Sabbath, was in the centre of two or three acres of cleared land; all the rest was forest. During the day, I was struck with the sense of propriety and delicacy of feeling shown by him. Sunday must have been a weary day to him; yet he engaged in no sports, performed no work, that I saw, inappropriate to it. In the afternoon, however, he took down his violin, and for a moment I felt pained, expecting such music as would distress one to hear on the Sabbath. He, however, refrained from all those tunes I knew he preferred, and played only sacred hymns, most of them Methodist ones. I could not imagine where he had learned them; but this silent respect to my feelings made me love him at once, and, as I hummed

them over with him, I conceived a respect for him I shall never lose.

The day went out in storms, and, as I lay down that night on my rough couch, I could hardly believe I was in the same State of which New York was the capital, whose hundred spires pierced the heavens.

I have been thus particular, and mean to be in future, because in no other way can you get a correct idea of the *daily* life one is compelled to lead who would penetrate these untrodden wilds of the Empire State. It is nonsense to talk of dignity and the impropriety of a man's carrying a rifle and fishing tackle, and spending his time in shooting deer and catching trout. Such folly is becoming to him only who sits on the piazza of a hotel at Saratoga Springs at the expense of twelve dollars a week for his health. I love nature and all things as God has made them. I love the freedom of the wilderness and the absence of conventional forms there. I love the long stretch through the forest on foot, and the thrilling, glorious prospect from some hoary mountain top. I feel my soul lift amid such scenes, and

throw off the chain that has been rusting around it, and I think better of man and worse of his mad chase after straws and baubles. I love it, and I know it is better for me than the thronged city, and better for my wasted health and exhausted frame than "all the poppies and madrigoras of the world."

LETTER IX.

LONG LAKE COLONY—A LOON—CROTCHET LAKE.

TAKING Mitchell with me, we embarked on Monday in his birch bark canoe for Crotchet and Rackett Lakes. Paddling leisurely up Long Lake, I was struck with the desolate appearance of the settlement. Scarcely an improvement had been made since I was last here, while some clearings had been left to go back to their original wildness. Disappointed purchasers, lured by extravagant statements, had given up in despondency, and left; and I was forcibly reminded, as I passed along, of a remark Dr. Todd made me last summer. Speaking of his Long Lake Colony, I mentioned that its prospects were rather gloomy. "Yes," said he; "the best people are all going away; in a short time, there will be nobody left but hunters. It

won't be settled for a century." It must have been with extreme regret he was forced to come to this conclusion, after having taken so much interest in it, and appealed so much to the sympathy of the public, and obtained so much money only to be thrown away. "It won't be settled for a century!" Time enough yet, then, to arouse attention to this section of our country. I have no doubt his latter conclusions are more just and sound than his former ones, though I think them somewhat erroneous. I believe this wilderness will be encroached upon in less time than that. Perhaps sixty or seventy years will be sufficient to give us so crowded a population as to force settlements into this desolate interior of the State. Still I agree with him that the prospects *are* gloomy. The church, too, has gone down; not a solitary conversion from all the labor expended here. Still, this was to be expected. A church formed of such materials ought to go to pieces. Even the last remaining member, certainly not the most enlightened or circumspect Christian I have ever met, told me that it was no more than he expected—

that no one there supposed the men would "hold out."

But our light canoe soon left the last clearing; and curving round the shore, we shot into the Rackett or Racquette River, and entered the bosom of the forest. As we left the lake, I saw a loon some distance up the inlet, evidently anxious to get out once more into open water. These birds (about the size of a goose), you know, cannot rise from the water except by a long effort and against a strong damp wind, and depend for safety on diving and swimming under water. At the approach of danger, they go under like a duck, and when you next see them, they are perhaps sixty rods distant, and beyond the reach of your bullet. If cornered in a small body of water, they will sit and watch your motions with a keenness and certainty that are wonderful, and dodge the flash of a percussion lock gun all day long. The moment they see the blaze from the muzzle they dive, and the bullet, if well aimed, will strike the water exactly where they sat. I have shot at them again and again, with a dead rest, and those watching would see the ball each time strike directly in the

hollow made by the wake of the water above the creature's back. There is no killing them except by firing at them when they are not expecting it, and then their neck and head are the only vulnerable points. They sit so deep in the water, and the quills on their backs are so hard and compact that a ball seems to make no impression on them. At least, I have never seen one killed by being shot through the body. Such are the means of self-preservation possessed by this curious bird, whose wild and shrill and lonely cry on the water at midnight is one of the most melancholy sounds I ever heard in the forest.

This loon, of which I was just now speaking, I wished very much to kill, in order to carry his skin to New York with me, and so, after firing at him in vain, I asked Mitchell if we could not, both of us together, manage to take him. He told me to land him where the channel was narrow that entered Long Lake, and paddle along towards where the loon was, and drive him out. As I approached him, he dived, and, knowing that he would make straight for the lake, I watched the whole line of his progress with the utmost

care; but, though my range took in nearly the third of a mile, I never saw him again. After a while, I heard the crack of a rifle around the bend of the shore, and hastening there, I found Mitchell loading his gun. He said the loon just raised his head above water, opposite where he stood, but he missed him, and the frightened bird did not appear again till it rose far out in the lake.

I mention this circumstance merely to show the habits of this, to me, most singular bird of our northern waters. I forgot to say that, although it cannot rise from the water except with great difficulty, and never attempts to escape danger neither can it walk on the shore. Diving is about the only gift it possesses, which it uses, I must say, with great ability and success.

Paddling up Racket River, we at length came to Buttermilk Falls, around which we were compelled to carry our canoes. So in another place we were compelled to carry them two miles, around rapids, through the woods. Nothing can be more comical and out of the way than a party thus passing through the forest. First, a yoke

is placed across the guide's neck, on which the boat is placed bottom side up, covering the poor fellow down to the shoulders, and sticking out fore and aft over the biped below in such a way as to make him appear half-human, half-supernatural, or rather *un-natural*. But it was no joke to me to carry my part of the freight. Two rifles, one overcoat, one tea-pot, one lantern, one basin, and a piece of pork, were my portion. Sometimes I had a change, namely, two oars and a paddle, balanced by a tin pail, in place of a rifle. Thus equipped, I would press on for a while, and then stop to see the procession—each poor fellow staggering under the weight he bore, while in the long intervals appeared the two inverted boats, walking through the woods on two human legs in the most surprising manner imaginable. Though tired and fagged out, I could not refrain from frequent outbursts of laughter that made the forest ring again. But there was no other way of getting along, and each one had to become a beast of burden. It was a relief to launch again; and when at last we struck the river just after it leaves Crotchet Lake, and

gazed on the beautiful sheet of water that was rolling and sparkling in the sunlight ahead, an involuntary shout burst from the party. A flock of wild ducks, scared at the sound, made the water foam as they rose at our feet and sped away. Stemming the rapid waters with our light prows, we were soon afloat on the bosom of the lake. The wind was blowing directly in our teeth, making the miniature waves leap and dance around us as if welcoming us to their home. A white gull rose from a rock at our side—a fish-hawk screamed around her huge nest on a lofty pine-tree on the shore, as she wheeled and circled above her offspring—a raven croaked overhead—the cry of loons arose in the distance—and all was wild yet beautiful. The sun was stooping to his glorious bed amid the purple mountains, whose sea of summits was calmly sleeping against the golden heavens—the cool breeze stirred a world of foliage on our right—green islands, beautiful as Elysian fields, rose out of the water as we advanced—the sparkling waves rolled merrily under as bright a sky as ever bent over the earth—and for a moment I

seemed to have been transported into a new world. I never was more struck by a scene in my life. Its utter wildness, spread out there where the axe of civilization has never struck a blow—the evening—the sunset—the deep purple of the mountains—the silence and solitude of the shores, and the cry of birds in the distance, combined to render it one of enchantment to me. My feelings were more excited, perhaps, by the consciousness that we were without any definite object before us—no place of rest, but sailing along looking out for some good point of land on which to pitch our camp.

Mitchell made no replies to our inquiries, but kept paddling along among the lily pads until he made for a point near the Rackett River, and mooring our boats to the shore, began to prepare for the night.

LETTER X.

SHOOTING A DEER—SUPPER IN THE WOODS—
MODERN SENTIMENTALISTS—THE INFLUENCE OF
NATURE.

AFTER we had pitched (not our tent, but) our shanty, we began to cast about for supper. I told Mitchell I could not think of eating a piece of salt pork for supper, and we must get some trout. So, rigging our lines on poles we cut on the shores of the lake, and taking our rifles with us, we jumped into our bark canoe, and pushed for some rapids in the Rackett River, where it entered Crotchett Lake. As we were paddling carefully along the edge of a marsh that put out into the water, Mitchell, who was at the stern, suddenly exclaimed, "Hist! I see the head of a deer coming down to feed." I sometimes

thought he could *smell* a deer, for he would often say he saw one before both its ears had fairly emerged from the bushes. "Shoot him," said he to me. "I can't," I replied; "I am too tired: shoot him yourself." So, stooping my head to let the ball pass over me, I watched him as he took aim; and it was a sight worth seeing. The careless, indolent manner so natural to him had disappeared as if by magic, and he stood up in the stern of the boat as straight as his own rifle, while his dark eye glanced like an eagle's. Every nerve in him seemed to have been suddenly touched by an electric spark, and as he now stooped to elude the watchfulness of the deer, and now again stood erect with his rifle to his shoulder, he was one of the most picturesque objects I ever saw. The timorous animal was feeding on the marsh, and ever and anon lifted her head as if she scented danger in the air. Then Mitchell's would drop like a flash, and gently lift again as the deer returned to her feed. She was about twenty rods off, and now stood fairly exposed amid the grass. It was a long shot for arm's length, and a tottlish

boat to stand in, but he resolved to try it. Slowly bringing his rifle to his face, he stood for a moment as motionless as a pillar of marble, while his gun seemed suddenly to have frozen in its place, so still and study did it lie in his bronze hand. A flash—a quick sharp report, and the noble deer bounded several feet into the air, then wheeled and sprang into the forest. He had shot directly over my head, and the mad bound of the animal told too well that the unerring bullet had struck near the life. Rowing hastily to the spot, we could find no traces of the deer; but Mitchell, with his eye bent on the ground, paced backward and forward without saying a word. At length he stopped, and, peering down amid the long grass, said, “Here is blood.” How he discovered it is a perfect mystery to me, for the grass was a foot long and very thick, while the blood spot was but a drop which had fallen on the roots of a single blade. I never should have noticed it, and if I had, should have considered it a mere discoloration of the leaf, fac-similes of which occurred at every step. The keen hawk eye of the Indian hunter,

however, could not be deceived, and he simply remarked, "He is hit deep or he would have bled freer," and struck on the trail. But this baffled even the Indian, for the marsh was covered with deer tracks, and the bushes into which the wounded one had sprung were a perfect matting of laurels and low shrubs. There was no more blood to be found, and we were perfectly at fault in our search. At length, tired and disappointed, I returned to the boat and stood waiting the return of Mitchell, when the sharp crack of his rifle again rang through the forest, followed soon after by a shrill whistle. I knew then that a deer had fallen, and hastened to the spot. There lay the beautiful creature stretched on the moss, with the life-blood welling from her throat, and over the body, watching, stood Mitchell leaning on his rifle. Unable to find the trail, he had made a shrewd guess as to the course the animal had taken, and, making a circuit, finally came upon her, lain down to die. At his approach, she sprang to her feet, ran a few rods, fell again exhausted, when the deadly aim of Mitchell

planted a bullet directly back of her ear, and her career was ended.

Satisfied with our game, we gave up our fishing, and, dragging the body to the boat, put back to our camp. The rest of our company stood on the shore waiting our return. They had heard the shots, and were expecting the spoils. Some, no doubt, will think this very cruel, and congratulate themselves on their kinder natures. I have seen such people, and heard them expend whole sentences of sentimentality upon the hardheartedness that could take the life of such an innocent creature, who very coolly wrung the necks of chickens every night for their breakfast, and devoured with great gusto the shoulder of a lamb for dinner. They slay without remorse the most harmless, trusting creatures that haunt their meadows, or sport upon their lawns, and take food from their hands, and yet are shocked at the idea of killing a deer or shooting a wild pigeon. *They* kill God's creatures, not from necessity, but to gratify their palates and minister to their luxurious tastes. But if any one supposes we shot this noble doe for sport, he must have a very vague

idea of the toils we had endured that day, or of our keen appetites. A man of great sentimentality might eat boiled eggs and toast with his coffee for breakfast, rather than sanction the death of an animal by partaking of flesh. I say he *might* do it, though I have never seen an instance of such great self-denial; but I doubt whether, if he were a day's journey from a human habitation, hungry and tired, with the prospect of nothing but a piece of salt pork, toasted on the end of a stick for supper and breakfast, he would hesitate to eat a venison steak. But I like to have forgotten. The pork, too, was the flesh of an animal, and it would be difficult to convince a hog that he had not as good a right to life as a deer. At all events, we enjoyed the venison, though perhaps the sentimentalist might say we were punished in the end, for it made us all outrageously sick. We either cooked it too soon (for in twenty minutes from the time the deer fell, a part of her was roasting); or we ate it too rare (for we were too hungry to wait till it was perfectly done); or we ate too much (for we were hungry as famished wolves);

or probably did all three things together, which quite upset me.

But after the things (*i. e.* the chips) were cleared away, I stretched myself on the ground under a tree whose dark trunk shone in the light of the cheerful fire, and began to muse on the day that had passed. How is it that a scene of quiet beauty makes so much deeper an impression than a startling one? The glorious sunset I had witnessed on that sweet lake—the curving and forest-mantled shores—the green islands—the mellow mountains, all combined to make a scene of surpassing loveliness; and now, as I lay and watched the stars coming out one after another, and twinkling down on me through the tree tops, all that beauty came back on me with strange power. The gloomy gorge and savage precipice, or the sudden storm, seem to excite the surface only of one's feelings, while the sweet vale, with its cottages and herds and evening bells, blends itself with our very thoughts and emotions, forming a part of our after existence. Such a scene sinks away into the heart like a gentle rain into the earth, while a rougher, nay, sublimer one,

comes and goes like a sudden shower. I do not know how it is that the gentler influence should be the deeper and more lasting, but so it is. The still small voice of nature is more impressive than her loudest thunder. Of all the scenery in the Alps, and there is no grander on the earth, nothing is so plainly daguerreotyped on my heart as two or three lovely valleys I saw. Those heaven-piercing summits, and precipices of ice, and awfully savage gorges, and fearful passes, are like a grand but indistinct vision on my memory; while those vales, with their carpets of green sward, and gentle rivulets, and perfect repose, have become a part of my life. In moments of high excitement or turbulent grief, they rise before me with their gentle aspect and quiet beauty, hushing the storm into repose, and subduing the spirit like a sensible presence. Oh, how I love nature! She has ten thousand voices even in her silence, and in all her changes goes only from beauty to beauty. And when she speaks aloud, and the music of running waters—the organ note of the wind amid the pine-tree tops—the rippling of waves—the song of birds,

and the hum of insects, fall on the ear, soul and sense are ravished. How is it that even good men have come to think so little of nature, as if to love her and seek her haunts and companionship were a waste of time? I have been astonished at the remarks sometimes made to me on my long jaunts in the woods, as if it were almost wicked to cast off the gravity of one's profession, and wander like a child amid the beauty which God has spread out with such a lavish hand over the earth. Why, I should as soon think of feeling reproved for gazing on the midnight heavens gorgeous with stars, and fearful with its mysterious floating worlds. I believe that every man degenerates without frequent communion with nature. It is one of the open books of God, and more replete with instruction than anything ever penned by man. A single tree standing alone, and waving all day long its green crown in the summer wind, is to me fuller of meaning and instruction than the crowded mart or gorgeously-built city.

But Mitchell has arisen from his couch of leaves, where he has been reclining silent and

thoughtful as his race, and is looking up to the sky and out upon the lake, and I know something is afoot.

LETTER XI.

FLOATING DEER—A NIGHT EXCURSION—MORNING
IN THE WOODS.

As I said in my last, Mitchell looked up to the sky and out upon the lake a moment, and then, in that quiet way so characteristic of his race, said, "If you want to go after a deer, it is time we started." It took but five minutes to load my rifle, put on my overcoat, and announce myself ready. Lifting our bark canoe softly from the rocks, we launched it on the still water, and, stepping carefully in, pushed off. Previously, however, Mitchell requested me to try one of my matches, to see if the damp had effected them.

You know that deer-floating amid backwoodsmen is very like deer-stalking in Scotland. In the warm summer months, especially in June, the

deer come down from the mountains at night to feed on the marshes that line the shores of the lakes and rivers. While they are thus feeding, if you pass along without making a noise, you can hear them as they step about in the edge of the water, or snort as they scent approaching danger. The moment you become aware of the proximity of one, strike a light and fix it firmly in the bow of your boat, or in a lantern on your head, and advance cautiously. The deer, attracted by the flame, stops and gazes intently upon it. If he hears no sound, he will not stir till you advance close to him. At first, you catch only the sight of his two eyes, burning like fireballs in the gloom; but as you approach nearer, the light is thrown on his red flanks, and he stands revealed in all his beautiful proportions before you. The candle serves, at the same time, to distinguish the animal, and give you a clear view of the sights along your gun-barrel; and he must be a poor shot who misses at five rods distance. The night must be dark and still, and no moon rise over the water.

This night, the only spot good for deer had been so trampled over by us, before dark, that

they would not come out upon it, and we floated on for a long time without hearing anything. I never before saw such an exhibition of the stealthy movements of an Indian. The lake was as still and smooth as a polished mirror, and our frail canoe floated over it as if impelled by an invisible hand. I knelt at the bow with my rifle before me, while Mitchell sat in the stern as still as a statue, yet urging the boat on by some strange movement of the paddle, which I tried in vain to comprehend. He did not even make a ripple on the water, and I could tell we were moving only by marking the shadow of trees we crossed, or the stars we passed over. Though straining every nerve to catch a sound, I never once heard the stroke of his paddle. It was the most mysterious ride I ever took. We entered the mouth of a river whose shores were dark with the sombre fir-trees, while ever and anon would come more clearly on the ear the roar of a distant waterfall. It was so dark I could make out nothing distinctly on shore; and the island-like tufts that here and there rose from the water, the little bays and rocky points we passed, assumed the most gro-

tesque shapes to my fancy, till I had all the feelings of one suddenly transported to a fairy land. Now the silent boat would cross the shadow of a lofty pine-tree that lay dark and calm in the water below, and now sail over a bright constellation that sparkled in our path; while the scream of a far-off loon came ringing like a spirit's cry through the gloom. Oh, how bright lay the sky, with its sapphire floor beneath us! and how black was the fringe of shadow that encroached on its beauty, and yet added to it by contrast! The silent night around me, the strangeness of the place, and the far removal from human habitations, were enough in themselves; but the dim, impalpable objects on shore, just distinct enough to confuse the senses, added tenfold mystery to the scene. I seemed moving through a boundless world of shadows, with nothing clear and natural but the bright constellations below me.

Thus we passed on for a mile, without a whisper or sign having passed between us. At length the canoe entered what seemed at first a deep bay, but soon changed to the mouth of a gloomy cavern. I leaned forward, striving in vain to make

out the misshapen objects before me ; but the more I looked, the more confused I grew, while, to add to my bewilderment, suddenly the dim outlines I was struggling to make out began to vanish, as if melting away in the darkness. At first, I thought the whole had been a structure of mist, and was dissolving in my sight ; but, casting my eyes beneath me, I saw we were receding over the stars. Then I understood it all. Mitchell, without making a sound, had drawn the boat slowly backwards, causing the objects before me to fade thus strangely from my sight. He knew the ground perfectly well, and could enter every bay and inlet as accurately as in broad daylight.

Pursuing our way up the channel, I was at length startled by a low "hist!" The next moment I heard the tread of a deer on the shore, and the light canoe darted through the water till I could hear the low ripple of the water around the bow. "Light up!" said Mitchell, in a whisper. As quietly as possible, I kindled a match, and lighting a candle, put it in a lantern made to fit the head like a hat, and clapping it in the place of my cap, cocked my rifle and leaned for-

ward. The bright flame flared out upon the surrounding gloom, and all was hush as death. But as we advanced towards where the deer was standing, the boat suddenly struck the dry limbs of a spruce-tree that had fallen in the water. Snap, snap went the brittle twigs, one of them piercing our bark canoe. We backed out of the dilemma as quick as possible; but the sound had alarmed the deer, and I could hear his long bounds as he cleared the bank and made off into the forest.

After cruising about a little while longer, we put back and crossed the lake to a deep bay on the farther side. But the moon now began to show her silver disk over the fir-trees, and our last remaining chance was to find a deer in the bay before the silver orb should climb the lofty pines that folded it in. But in this, too, we were disappointed; and, the unclouded light now flooding lake and forest, we turned wearily towards our camp-fire, that was blazing cheerfully amid the trees on the farther shore. Just then a merry laugh came floating over the water from our companions there, breaking the silence which had enchained us, and for the first time we spoke. My

limbs were almost paralyzed, from having been kept so long in one position, and I was sick and weary. Still I would not have missed that mysterious boat ride, and the strange sensations it had awakened, to have been saved from thrice the inconvenience it had occasioned me. It was one of those new things in this stereotyped life of ours, imparting new experiences, and giving one, as it were, a deeper insight into his own soul.

At length we stretched ourselves upon the boughs, and were soon fast asleep. I awoke, however, about midnight, and found our fire reduced to a few embers, while the rain was coming down as if that were its sole business for the night. It is gloomy in the woods without a fire; and I never seem so companionless as when in the still midnight I awake and find nothing but the dark forest about me, cheered by no light. A bright crackling flame seems like a living thing, keeping awake on purpose to watch over you.

Leaving my companions, whose heavy breathings told how profound were their slumbers, I sallied out in search of fuel. But there was nothing but green fir-trees, that would not burn, to be

found; and, after striking my axe into several, and getting my lower extremities thoroughly wet, I returned and lay down again, and slept till morning. With the first dawn, I was up, and, taking the Indian's canoe, pushed off in search of a deer. The heavy fog lay in masses upon the water, and the damp morning was still and quiet as the night that had passed. I floated about till the sun rose over the mountains, turning the lake into a sheet of gold, and sending the mist in spiral wreaths skyward, and then slowly paddled my way back to camp. As I was thus floating tranquilly along over the water, I heard, far up the lake, where it lost itself in the mountains, two distinct and heavy reports like the discharge of firearms. Who could be in that solitude besides ourselves? was the first inquiry. I mentioned the circumstance when I reached the camp, and found that my companions, who had been busy in preparing breakfast, had also heard the reports. Mitchell, just then returning from an expedition after a fish-hawk, which he brought back with him, heard them also, and very quietly remarked they were not rifle shots. His quick ear

never deceived him. "What, then, were they?" I inquired. "Trees," he replied. "But," said I, "there is not a breath of air this morning, while it blew very hard yesterday afternoon." "They always fall," he replied, "before a storm. It will storm by to-morrow." There was something sad in thinking of those two trees thus falling all alone on a still and beautiful morning, foretelling a coming tempest. Sombre omens these, and mysterious, as becomes the untrodden forest.

Mitchell had shot an immense fish-hawk, breaking only the tip of its wing, so as to prevent it from flying. He brought it and set it down before the fire, when the fearless bird drew himself proudly up and steadily faced us down, without attempting to run away. His savage eye betokened no fear, and, when any one of us approached him, his leg would be lifted and his talons expanded ready to strike. I was never so struck with the boldness of a bird in my life. At length Mitchell caught him and placed him on a rock by the edge of the lake. For a moment, the noble bird forgot his wound, and, spreading his

broad wings, leaped from his resting-place. But the broken pinion refused to carry him heavenward, and he fell heavily in the water. I saw Mitchell bring his rifle to his shoulder, and the next moment a bullet crushed through the head of the poor creature, and its sufferings were over.

Such are the incidents of a life in the woods, and thus do the days and nights pass—not without meaning or instruction. Not merely the physical man is strengthened, but the intellectual also, by these long furloughs from close application, and this intimate companionship with nature. A man cannot move in the forest without thinking of God, for all that meets his eye is just as it left his mighty hand. The old forest, as it nods to the passing wind, speaks of him; the still mountain points towards his dwelling-place, and the calm lake reflects his sky of stars and sunshine. The glorious sunset and the blushing dawn, the gorgeous midnight and the noon-day splendor, mean more in these solitudes than in the crowded city. Indeed, they look differently—they *are* different.

LETTER XII.

LOST IN THE WOODS — AN OLD INDIAN AND HIS
DAUGHTER — MITCHELL — THE ADIRONDAC IRON
WORKS.

IN THE WOODS, *August.*

It was with weary forms and subdued hearts we turned the prows of our boats down the lake, and left the place of our encampment, probably for ever. No one who has not traveled in the woods can appreciate the feelings of regret with which one leaves the spot where he has pitched his tent only for a single day or night. The half-extinguished firebrands scattered around, the broken sticks that for the time seemed valuable as silver forks, and the deserted shanty, all have a desolate appearance, and it seems like forsaking trusty friends to leave them there in the forest alone.

The morning was sombre and the wind fresh as we pulled down the lake and again entered the narrow river that pierced so adventurously the dark bosom of the forest. The fatiguing task of carrying our boats was performed over again, with the additional burden of the deer we had but partially consumed. At one carrying-place, P. took two rifles and an overcoat as his part of the freight, and started off in advance. We were each of us too much engaged with our own affairs to notice the direction he took, but supposing, of course, he was ahead, pushed on. But as we came to the next launching-place, he was nowhere to be found. "He has gone on, I guess," said one, "to the next carrying-place." We shouted, but the echo of our own voices was the only reply the boundless forest sent back, and one was dispatched ahead to ascertain whether our conjecture was true. The report was soon brought back that P. was nowhere to be found. I, by this time, began to feel somewhat alarmed, for the lost one was my brother; and, taking Mitchell with me, hastened back towards the spot where he had parted from us. I shouted aloud,

but the deep waterfall drowned my voice, and its sullen roar seemed mocking my anxious halloo. I then fired my rifle, but the sharp report was followed only by its own echo. Mitchell then discharged his, and, after waiting anxiously awhile, we heard a shot far up the river. Soon after, "bang—bang" went two more guns in the same direction. The poor fellow had heard our shot, and, fearing we might not hear his in return and so take a wrong direction, just stood and loaded and fired as fast as he could. When we found him, he was pale as marble, and looked like one who had been in a state of perfect bewilderment. On leaving us, instead of going down stream, as he should have done, he had gone directly up. After awhile he came out on the bank of a strange river. As it was on the wrong side of him to be the one we had floated down, he thought he must have crossed over to another stream, but finally concluded it would be the safest course to retrace his steps. This he was doing to the best of his ability when he heard our rifle shots. We scolded him for his stupidity in thus causing us alarm and delay, which he

very coolly remarked was neither very just nor sensible, and then trudged on.

Towards night, B——n and myself arrived with Mitchell at his hut, where we found his aged Indian father and young sister waiting his return. "Old Peter," as he is called, had come, with his daughter, a hundred and fifty miles in a bark canoe, to visit him. The old man, now over eighty years of age, shook with palsy, and was constantly muttering to himself in a language half-French half-Indian, while his daughter, scarce twenty years old, was silent as a statue. She was quite pretty, and her long hair, which fell over her shoulders, was not straight, like that of her race, but hung in wavy masses around her bronzed visage. She would speak to none, not even to answer a question, except to her father and brother. I tried in vain to make her say No or Yes. She would invariably turn to her father, and he would answer for her. This old man still roams the forest, and stays where night overtakes him. It was sad to look upon his once-powerful frame, now bowed and tottering, while his thick gray hair hung like a huge mat

around his wrinkled and seamed visage. His tremulous hand and faded eye could no longer send the unerring rifle ball to its mark, and he was compelled to rely on a rusty fowling-piece. Everything about him was in keeping. Even his dog was a mixture of the wolf and dog, and was the quickest creature I ever saw move. Poor old man, he will scarcely stand another winter, I fear—and some lonely night, in the lonely forest, that dark-skinned maiden will see him die, far from human habitations; and her feeble arm will carry his corpse many a weary mile, to rest among his friends. As I have seen her decked out with water-lilies, paddling that old man over the lake, I have sighed over her fate. She seems wrapped up in her father, and to have but one thought, one purpose of life—the guarding and nursing of her feeble parent. The night that sees her sitting alone by the camp-fire beside her dead parent will witness a grief as intense and desolate as ever visited a more cultivated bosom. God help her in that dark hour. I can conceive of no sadder sight than that forsaken maiden, in some tempestuous night, sitting all alone in the

heart of the boundless forest, holding the dead or dying head of her father, while the moaning winds sing his dirge, and the flickering fire sheds a ghastly light on the scene. Sorrow in the midst of a wilderness seems doubly desolate.

How strong is habit. That old man cannot be persuaded to sit down in peace beneath a quiet roof, ministered to and cherished as his wants require, but still clings to his wandering life, and endures hunger, cold and fatigue, and wanders houseless and homeless. He still hunts, though his shot seldom strikes down a deer; and he still treads the forest, though his trembling limbs but half fulfil their office, and his aged shoulders groan under the burden of his light canoe. I saw him looking at a handful of specimens of birch bark he had collected, and was balancing which to choose as material for a new boat. He still looks forward to years of hunting and days of toil, when the barque of life is already touching those dark waters that roll away from this world and all that it contains.

After spending a night with Mitchell, we bade him good-by, and started for the Adirondac

Mountains, where it was necessary to have another guide. He rowed us across the lake, and accompanied us several miles on our way, as if loth to leave us. I gave him a canister of powder, a pocket compass, and a small spy-glass, to keep as mementos of me, and shook his honest hand with as much regret as I ever did that of a white man. I shall long remember him. He is a man of deeds and not of words—kind, gentle, delicate in his feelings, honest and true as steel. I would start on a journey of a thousand miles in the woods with him alone, without the slightest anxiety, although I was burdened down with money. I never lay down beside a trustier heart than his, and never slept sounder than I have with one arm thrown across his brawny chest.

We had started in the morning for a clearing between twenty and thirty miles distant, but after we had performed fourteen miles of it, and found ourselves beneath the roof of a comfortable log-house, we concluded to stay over night. The next morning, bright and early, we resumed our march, and at noon reached this solitary clearing which overlooks the whole wild, gigantic and

broken mass of the Adirondac Mountains. Far over all towered away the lordly peak of Tahawas, nick-named Mount Marcy. Its cone-shaped summit arose out of a perfect sea of mountains, and as I gazed on it I half regretted my determination to ascend it. I never looked on an Alpine height with such misgivings. It was, however, more than twenty miles distant, and a nearer view might diminish the difficulties that from this point seemed insurmountable. Four miles more through the woods brought us to Lake Sandford, where we found the hunter Cheney, who took us in his boat five miles further on, to the Adirondac Iron Works. These iron works are twenty-five miles from any public road, in the very heart of the forest. Mr. Henderson, of Jersey City, first visited them. He was told by an Indian of their existence, and gave him two hundred dollars to be conducted to them. The mountains around are solid ore, of a very good quality; but the carting of provisions in, and the iron out, eats up all the profits; so that though two or three hundred thousand dollars have been expended on the works, not one dollar has been made. It is a

lonely place, and the smoke of a furnace, and the clink of the hammer, are strange sights and sounds there.

But of these, more anon.

LETTER XIII.

THE FIRE ISLANDS.

How true it is that "half the world does not know how the other half lives." Sixty miles from New York exists a different race of people, who never see a city paper, and only know of what is going on in this great Babel from those who visit them or those who take their game to market. There is a large population living on and about the barren Fire Islands whose whole means of livelihood is the game they kill. These men do not hunt for sport, but as a business; and the amount of wild fowl annually slaughtered on the southern shore of Long Island, for the New York market, is enormous. A descendant of an old family here, which has owned a large territory on the south shore ever since New York was a

colony of England, told me that two families, generation after generation, have had the lease of two islands of barren rocks, for the sole purpose of killing the wild fowl that frequent them. They allow no others to hunt about them. These hunters pay no attention to the railroad, and make no use of it for the transportation of their game to market. They keep a wagon going constantly to and from New York, as they did years ago. When winter sets in, and game becomes scarce, many of them go south, in a sloop of their own, or hire a passage in some vessel, and shoot on the Chesapeake Bay, about Charleston and Mobile, supplying the southern market with game.

But, before speaking further of this peculiar class of people, I will give a sort of diary of my visit. We were on a visit to a friend on the south shore, and late in the afternoon drove up to the century-old edifice, that stood facing the ocean with its time-worn front. This old family mansion is the relic of another one which stood here when New York was a colony, and the owner of it governor under England. It is overgrown with

vines, and standing as it does in full sight of the sea, presents a most venerable appearance.

After dinner, we rode over to the old Indian tavern, "CONNETIQUOIT" (I think that is the right spelling), where gentlemen from New York stop in their hunting expeditions in this region. Two deer had been killed during the day, and one of them lay stark and stiff before the door as we drove up. Poor fellow! the fleet limbs that were winged with speed in the morning, would never bound through the forest again.

The rain beginning to descend in torrents, we turned our horses' heads homewards, and there, by a blazing wood fire, such as you find in the new settlements alone, composed ourselves for the evening. It was Saturday night, and a gloomy night it was. The heavens were black as Erebus, while a strong southeast wind came from its long track on the Atlantic, and howled with an ominous sound around the old dwelling in which we were seated. I rose and went to the door, and looked out upon the sea. No other building was in sight, and the solitude of the scene was heightened by the murky heavens, the

moaning blast, and the deep prophetic voice of the surge as it rolled heavily on the shore. The music of the sea always finds an answering chord in the human heart, especially heard at night when the gathering storm is sounding its trumpet and summoning the reluctant waves to the coming conflict. There is a sullen threatening sound in the roar of the ocean heard at such a time, which fills the heart with gloomy forebodings, and brings before the vision the proud barque, reeling to and fro in the tempest, with her masts bent and bowed, and her rent sails streaming to the blast, and the form of the sailor clinging to the parting shrouds, and all the tumult and terror of a shipwreck. As I stood listening to the Atlantic speaking to the shore that hurled back its blow, the flame of a lighthouse five miles distant, on one of the Fire Islands, suddenly flashed up in the surrounding darkness. Round and round in its circle it slowly swept, now lost in the surrounding gloom, as it looked away from me towards the vexed Atlantic, and now blazing landward through the driving rain. That lantern had almost a human look as it slowly revolved on its axis. It seemed keeping

watch and ward over sea and land—now casting its flaming eye over the deep to see what vessels were tossing there, and now looking down on the bay and land to see how it fared with them in the stormy night. I love a lighthouse, with its constant guard over human welfare. After a long voyage at sea, baffled by calms and frightened by storms, when I have caught the friendly flame of the lighthouse welcoming me back to the green earth—the first to meet me and to greet me—I have felt an affection for it as if it were a living thing. That steady watch-fire burning over the deep, through the long tempestuous night, for the sake of the anxious mariner, is not a bad emblem of the watch and care of the Deity over his creatures, tossed and benighted on the sea of life.

How long I gazed on that revolving light I know not, but it was the last thing my eye fell on as I turned to my couch, and I thought, as I left it blazing through the tempest, that it

“————— looked lovely as Hope,
That star on life's tremulous ocean.”

I slept this first night in the “haunted room.”

I like so mysterious a cognomen to rooms and staircases in old castles and dilapidated buildings: it is in harmony with the place. A fine, elegant mansion here on the ocean shore would not have possessed half the interest this old time-worn building did. This "haunted room" derived its *sobriquet* from a sound frequently heard by those who slept in it, as if carriage wheels were rolling up to the door. This sound had often waked up the owner of the mansion, and roused him to look out and see what visitors were coming at so late an hour of the night. The frequent recurrence of this rattling of wheels had ceased to be an object of remark, and was attributed by the family to rats or some other similar cause.

But not long since, a young lady visiting the family was placed in this room without any mention being made of the mysterious sounds sometimes heard in it. She had expected friends during the day, who had not come, and consequently their arrival was not anticipated till the following day. But at midnight ("the witching hour" when ghosts awake and fairies walk their nightly rounds) she was roused from her slumbers

by the rapid roll of carriage wheels over the hard ground. Supposing her friends had come, she jumped from bed and hastened to the window. The bright round moon was shining down, making the woods and fields around almost as light as day. She looked up the road, but no carriage was in sight, and naught but the still moonlight sleeping over the scene met her gaze. She turned back astonished, when the rattling of wheels again shook the room. Supposing now that the carriage had gone round to the back door, she ran through the hall and raised the window to greet her friends, but naught but the quiet moonlight was there also. She was now thoroughly alarmed, and hastened back to her room, when the rapid roll of wheels again met her ear. This crowned the mystery, and she gave a shriek and went into hysteric fits. Since then, it has been called "the haunted room."

I slept none the less soundly for these stories, not being given to superstitious fears. I am more afraid of *man* than I am of his *ghost*, and of *his* spirit than of all the other spirits and mysterious forms of air that walk the earth or sea. Besides,

I should not have got up had a dozen carriages arrived; for if the fairies or more sullen ghosts choose to take a drive such a wild and stormy night as that, they were welcome to their taste. I had certainly no objection to their taking their own mode of amusing themselves, provided they kept out of doors.

But it is strange how strong the superstitious feeling is in man. Some of the best and strongest-minded men I have ever known have been subject to fears that a child should be ashamed of. To see the moon over the left shoulder will bring bad luck, and a journey commenced on Friday will end unfortunately. So do men, sensible men, talk. A few rats between the walls, or confined air creeping through some aperture in the building, will drive a lady into convulsions.

LETTER XIV.

THE FIRE ISLANDS.

IT was Sabbath morning, when I arose and threw open the shutters. The mist-covered ocean lay like a sleeping giant before me, stretching his arms up into the land, and the drizzling rain came down without a sound. Out by the barn, a negro was feeding a flock of black turkeys, while three or four goats had mounted an old wagon, trying, apparently, to imagine it was a rock. The poor creatures, having nothing else to climb, and unable to restrain their propensities, mount the fences, wagons, or anything that looks like an eminence.

After breakfast, we packed ourselves into a close-covered Rockaway, and started for the church, some five miles off. It was built at the

private expense of the lady I was with, and was the only place of public worship for miles around. The Methodists had preaching, now and then, in a school-house in the woods, which we passed on our way to church. The church to which we were bound is a little box of a thing, capable of holding perhaps two hundred people. The storm had kept many at home, and the congregation on this day amounted to perhaps sixty or seventy. The sermon was a mere expansion of the story of the woman who was cured of an issue of blood. The preacher was a young man of ordinary intellect. He was also somewhat embarrassed, which spoiled the delivery of the sermon. The simple narrative of the New Testament he took for an outline sketch, which he filled up to suit his imagination.

But there was something primitive about this place of worship that interested me; and as I came out and looked on the faded forest on one side, and the far-receding ocean on the other, while all was silent and still around, it did not seem possible that I was within a few hours' ride of New York and its Babel-like confusion. It

seemed like shoving the western frontier up to the city, and from its wild borders looking down Broadway, and through the magnificent churches.

Monday morning was cold and blustering. A chill west wind swept the ocean, and raged around the dwelling, till every shingle and clapboard seemed drumming against the timbers to keep its fingers warm. The fragmentary clouds went trooping fiercely over the intensely bright sky; the sea was covered with foam, and the deep voice of the waves came riding inland on the blast; while a schooner, dragging its anchor, drove rapidly along the shore, its naked masts reeling to and fro in the gale, around which the sea-gulls swept in rapid circles. Our friend said that some hunters were to drive deer that day, and he wished us to see the manner in which it was done. The cold, fierce blast did not give as a very cheerful welcome out of doors, but we bundled up and started. The call of the master brought the hounds in full chase after us, and we rode over to the hunters' rendezvous, and were soon in the woods. The common way of hunting the deer on Long Island is to start

several packs of hounds in different directions, and then station men along a stream near, in places where the deer are found by experience generally to come when they take to the water to throw the dogs off the scent. I was placed in the heart of the forest, on a good point of observation, beside the stream whose current swept the shrubs and flags that almost buried it from sight. Standing on a board to keep my feet dry, I turned to the sun to get the full benefit of his beams, for I was well-nigh frozen. Here I stood, hour after hour, with naught but the roaring of the blast through the pine-trees overhead to break the solitude of the scene. Scathed and blighted trunks threw out their long withered arms, and swayed them about as if reaching blindly after something in the air, and groaned on their aged roots; while the tufted tips of the pine and hemlock bowed and sprung as if curtsying to the wind. The deep cry of the hounds, as they opened on the track, had soon died away on the blast, and I had nothing to do but stand and watch the forest as the swaying tree-tops traced all kinds of diagrams on the sky. Suddenly, one tall pine-

tree seemed to swing to a passing gust as if its foundations were yielding; then, sallying back as if to collect its energies for the terrible leap before it, it stretched heavily forward, and came, with a crash that shook the banks, to the ground. The fall of a lordly but blighted tree, all alone in the depths of the forest, is one of the most lonely things in nature. As if it were not enough that its green crown should wither among its fellows, and its glory depart, it must stoop from its proud, erect position, and lie prone on the earth. Its great heart is at last broken, and it buries its mighty forehead in the earth. A falling tree seems always a conscious being to me. With these thoughts, however, was mingled a little personal concern for myself, and I began to measure rather anxiously the distance between me and several old trees that the wind seemed determined to rock out of their places. I calculated with the nicest precision the exact length of several that bowed towards me, in a salutation I could have dispensed with, and the direction others would probably take. No more fell, however, and at one o'clock I turned my steps out of

the forest. I had seen and heard nothing during the day but the shaking trees and the fierce blast. Arrived at the place of rendezvous, no one had seen a deer; but on one of the stands two successive shots had been heard, and the gentleman placed there had not come in. He soon appeared, however, but bringing nothing with him. He was a gentleman of rank in Europe, and was equal to business plans that embraced a continent; but a *deer* could unnerve him. He had never seen one of these noble animals, in all its wildness and beauty, face to face, until this day. Sitting on the bank, a beautiful doe had entered the stream before him without seeing him, and there, at the distance of five rods, stood for five minutes, looking with its wild yet gentle eyes towards his place of ambush. With a double-barreled gun, loaded with forty buck shot, he fired at her. With a sudden bound she cleared the bank, and sped unharmed away.

The effect of a noble deer, on one who has never seen one in the forest, is most singular. The gentleman with whom I stopped told some anecdotes of New Yorkers, that were almost in-

credible. A fine deer throwing his proud antlers through the forest, as he outstrips the wind in his flight, is a beautiful sight. To kill one, as he thus springs away in all the pride of freedom, seems downright cruelty; and one's heart always relents when the deed is done, unless long practice has rendered him accustomed to it. But the hunter laughs at such sentiment, and can see no difference between killing a deer and a lamb.

A gentleman who had never seen a deer in his native forest, told me that, being stationed in a place with his gun where one was expected to pass, he saw him approach and retire without molestation. He heard a crashing through the under-brush, and the next moment a noble buck bounded past him, with all that beauty and strength for which the deer is remarkable. He gazed on him as he rose and fell in his long bounds through the forest, in such perfect admiration, that he forgot he had a gun. It never occurred to him that such a noble animal was to be shot, until he was out of his reach. "Why," said he, "I could not have killed him if my life had depended on it."

The instinct with which God has endowed the deer for self-preservation seems sometimes like the cunning and reason of man. A gentleman, an old hunter, told me that not long since he chased a doe all day through these woods without success, and was perfectly astonished at the cunning she exhibited in baffling her pursuers. The hounds aroused her early in the morning, when she bounded away, leaving them far behind. After running an hour or so she laid down to rest till the dogs, followed close by the hunter, on a full gallop through the woods, came up, when she again started off. She managed in this way till noon, and then adopted a different expedient. Coming to a public road, she walked up and down it in the same track several times, and then sprang with a long leap into the forest. The dogs, when they arrived, ran up and down the road, making the forest ring with their deep bay, perfectly baffled. But when the hunter came up, knowing the cunning of the animal, he began to beat about the bushes, and soon set the hounds on the track. Following close after, he at length got sight of her galloping slowly through

an open field, apparently not in the least frightened, keeping her enemies at a safe distance behind her as she stretched over the plain. Still unable to throw them from the track, she dashed into a flock of sheep, and began to chase them over the field. Scattering them hither and thither in confusion, she soon got the dogs pursuing them, and then boldly pushed again for the forest. But the hunter being at hand to assist the dogs, they were soon again in hot pursuit. As the last resort, after doubling a while through the woods, she dashed towards the ocean, and following an inlet along its margin at low-water mark (it was low tide), swam boldly out into the bay, and, taking a long semicircle, landed on a distant point, and sought for the last time the shelter of the forest. When the hounds came up, the rising tide had obliterated nearly all the tracks, and, it being now dusk, the chase was given up, and the noble deer that had struggled so bravely for life was saved. It would have been downright cruelty to have slain her after such an effort to live. It would have seemed like slaying a rational being.

What a world this is!—one half pursuers, the

other half pursued: half straining every nerve to save life, the other half equally intent on destroying it. Thus instinct battles instinct, and passion passion, and has done since the fall cursed the earth.

LETTER XV.

THE FIRE ISLANDS.

I WILL trouble you with only this letter from the Fire Islands. The morning after our unsuccessful deer expedition, the huntsmen started out again. It was an Indian summer day in appearance and temperature. Not a breath of air shook the withered leaves that drooped from the branches, while the smoky atmosphere drew a veil over the sky and earth, giving a soft and dreamy aspect to nature. It was one of those days when sound is transmitted to a great distance, and the whole concave seems a great whispering gallery, save that while it transmits it also *dulls* every sound. Again I stood in the depths of the forest beside the stream; but how changed had everything become. There was no motion, no wild

swaying to and fro of the distracted branches, no struggle of the old trees to keep their ancient foundations. The stream slipped by with a gentle murmur, kissing the flags that stooped over it, while even the light tread of the "chick-a-dee-dee" could be heard on the dry leaves. Not a cloud was on the sky, while the sun looked drowsily down through the murky atmosphere, and all was silent, as a great forest without wind always is, for

"The streams were staid and the maples still."

It was a fine morning for the huntsman, who delights above all things in the cry of the hounds as they open on the track. As the forest this morning rang and echoed with their deep baying as they struck the fresh track, I did not wonder at the excitement often witnessed in the chase, and involuntarily there came to my mind the opening lines of the *Lady of the Lake*:—

The stag at eve had drunk his fill
Where danced the moon on Morna's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade ;

But when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouthed bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way ;
And faint from farther distance borne
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

Several deer were driven this morning, but none killed, as most of the hunters were gentlemen from New York, to whom the sight of a deer was a new object, and what the hunters call the "buck fever" is not an uncommon thing with them. The exhibitions they frequently make is very ludicrous. It was here Mr. Delmonico, of the famous eating-house of New York, was found dead. A shot was heard during the day on the stand which he occupied, and after the hunters had all come in he was missing. On going to the spot, he was found fallen with his face in the water. His gun, partly reloaded, lay beside him. He had evidently seen a deer and fired at him and missed. The excitement had brought on an epileptic fit, and before he had finished re-charging his gun he had fallen. Having pitched for-

ward into the water, he was drowned before he could recover from the fit.

A Frenchman from the city, standing here one day, saw a large buck come leaping down the stream, tossing his huge antlers in the air. Without firing, he threw down his gun and gave chase, thinking in his simplicity that the deer could not possibly get through the tangled woods with his branching horns, and he could take him alive.

As I stood beside the stream, from the distant sea came the constant dull report of firearms. It was an excellent day for duck shooting on the water, and up and down the shore, for eight or ten miles, it was an incessant explosion of firearms. Those who supply the New York market with ducks have a curious way of taking them. A box just large enough to contain and float a man as he lies on his back is pushed four or five miles out to sea in some bay, supported by two flat boards that spread out like wings on either side, to break the waves that would otherwise dash over it. Anchoring this in some convenient spot, they lie down, and throwing out their decoy duck (made of wood), attract every flock that

passes by to the spot. As they wheel around and stoop to the water, the unseen hunter fires his huge double-barreled gun into their midst. In a good day, he frequently kills a hundred birds.

At length I strolled away by myself, intending to take a long semicircle through the forest and strike the ocean some four or five miles distant. It was one of those days in which I love to wander alone "by stream or wave" or through the sombre autumn woods, and let the poetry, the thoughtfulness, and even the sadness of nature sink into my spirit. Sometimes I would be ankle deep in the withered leaves as I strolled on, I scarcely knew or cared whither. Coming at length to an arm of the sea that stretched far inland, I followed it down for a mile or two to the main shore. It was low tide, and so, with the aid of tight boots, I was able to cross the marshes which the rising sea floods, and stood at last on the smooth sand beach, along which I wandered for more than a mile.

Stand here a moment with me, and look off on the solemn ocean. Not a breath of air is abroad,

and the mighty waters spread away like an endless mirror from your feet. The smooth ripple comes with a slow and sluggish movement, and lays its gentle lip without a murmur on the beach; while flocks of wild fowl glance by through the hazy atmosphere, like messengers from the distant deep, where it melts and blends into the smoky horizon. Not a human habitation is in sight, and, as you stand and muse, you cannot but think of that *other* "vast ocean" in which you are "to sail so soon."

But listen a moment! Miles out on the slumbering water, lost in the smoky atmosphere, comes the incessant report of firearms. Scores of these "batteries" are anchored there. The incessant firing they keep up seems like the cannonading between two battle ships that are at the work of death. The dull and heavy sound is increased in volume on the sea, and, by the state of the atmosphere, and the uninterrupted bom! bom! from the distant mist-wrapped ocean, awakens strange feelings in one just from the stir and tumult of city life. There is not an interval of ten seconds between these explosions. Sometimes

there are several discharges at once, like a whole broadside, and then a rolling fire like that which goes from stem to stern of a ship, and then a straggling shot jarring the atmosphere with its report. As a sort of interlude to all this, from an unseen island, three or four miles distant, rises a confused and constant scream from myriads of sea fowl congregated there—keeping up one of the wildest concerts I ever listened to. Rising as it does out of the mist, and, as it were, in response to the constant explosion along the sea, like the cries of the wounded and dying on a field of battle, and just as twilight is deepening over the water, it imparts inconceivable wildness and mystery to the scene. In the midst of this mighty solitude, I stood absorbed and impressed beyond measure, and lingered till the increasing darkness and the rising tide admonished me it was time to return. A new world of thought and emotion had been born within me in the few hours I had mused on that solitary shore.

How impressive nature is in all her aspects! Whether she looks in one's face from the smiling landscape of a New England valley, or humbles

one amid the glaciers and snow-fields and shuddering abysses of Alpine solitudes, or saddens the heart with the murmur of waves and broad expanse of the mysterious sea, she presents the same attractions and has the same chastening effect. I never shall forget that afternoon stroll by the ocean around the Fire Islands.

The next morning, we were to leave for the city. The sky was overcast as I rose and looked out on the ocean. It seemed preparing for one of those warm, quiet, drizzling rains. The atmosphere in such a state always has great refracting power from the moisture it contains, and I was struck with the appearance of buildings on the Fire Islands. Usually, they seemed (as they really did) to stand up some of them several feet from the shore, but now I could see distinctly the shining surface of the water beyond their foundations. Where the island was low, it appeared now to be cut in two, and the bright water passed entirely through to the ocean beyond. The lighthouse, which was elevated on a rock, now sat *in* the sea, if there was any reliance to be placed in one's eyes. Through a powerful spy-glass I

could distinguish the water on three sides of it as distinctly as I could see the lighthouse itself, and, had I not been informed otherwise, should have had no doubt the building stood in the water, and that the island here and there was really divided. This deception was owing to the refracting power of the atmosphere. The rays of light were reflected strongly from the polished surface of the water, while so few came from the dusky beach as to make it invisible to the eye. The atmosphere refracting the rays from this smooth surface lifted it up from its real level and threw it apparently above the land. At least this is my explanation, and it is rational and philosophical, whether true in this case or not. The lady of the mansion told me that she had frequently seen ships at sea directly over the island, when no part of the ocean is visible over it, even from the top of the house. This reminds me of the report that, in a peculiar state of the atmosphere, Lake Ontario has been seen from Rochester lying calm and distinct against the distant horizon. At sea, I have heard captains relate having seen ships that were not visible from deck, mast downwards in

the clouds. Mentioning this circumstance to the lady, she said she had witnessed the same singular appearance several times from her house. The explanation of *this* phenomenon I will leave to some one else.

It was with regret I bid the hospitable, intelligent, and generous inmate of the mansion adieu, and turned again towards the city. I know of no life more desirable than that of a large landholder whose residence is fixed on some such picturesque spot as this.

THE END.