REMINISCENCES

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

ELAM FENN, AND LYDIA, HIS WIFE,

WITH A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE

TIMES IN WHICH THEY LIVED.

BY

LEVERETT STEARNS GRIGGS.

Press of The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, Hartford, Conn.

WHY THIS BOOK.

Not "of arms and a man" does this book tell, but of a man of peace. Said Gen. Sherman, at the annual Alumni dinner of Yale College, in 1876: "I love peace and hate war as much as did any of these old divines," pointing to the portraits on the walls of Alumni Hall. This book tells of a man of a peaceful spirit, and a peaceful life; and yet of one who knew verily what affliction was. Not of a public person; his career lay rather in the obscurity of a rural town and village. But the poet has sung,

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

Such a gem was this man—"of purest ray serene." Not the caves of ocean alone bear them; Amherst men remember the superb tourmaline which Prof. C. U. Shepard used to show, dug by himself with a hoe, from its earth-bed in Maine. A gem from a hill of New England, was the subject of our story.

We have thought it unfit that the only biography of him should be that of most of us—written on the one stony leaf at the grave's head. For loving kindred and acquaintance,

and for one, now and then, of the great common family of our human relationship, these lines are traced, to save a shadow of a sweet-spirited brother—better, father—and of the times in which he was among men—body, mind, and heart—all now, alas, the man—the men, gone beneath the dust. It was Dr. Todd who said that one of the hardest things for him to believe, was that he should live after he was dead. Yet the glory of his dying hour spoke of aught but doubt.

Into dust
Sinks the just,
That he may rise
Above the skies.
Oh! heart that breaks,
The Master speaks—
"Because I live,
Life I will give,
And from the grave
My own will save."
If Love must weep
Where dear saints sleep,
Dark Doubt and Fear,
Weep ye not here.

TERRYVILLE, CONN., NOV. 22, 1884.

MORNING.

Town-Hill, so-called, in Plymouth, Conn., is a widely-extended, irregular elevation of land, occupying a large area in the central portion of the town. It lies a little to the south of a direct line between the village of Plymouth Center and that of Terryville in the same town, two miles distant to the east. Ascending this hill by a road which crosses the highway at a point about a half mile west of Terryville, soon after reaching the broad upland at the summit, we come to a dear, old, red house, on the left, standing thirty feet or so back from the road. Dear is this house because of the people it has sheltered—the warm, warm hearts that have loved in it, and all the microcosmic variety of human hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, that every day, for nearly a hundred and fifty years, has here constituted the real life of a New England home. Old this house, by positive proof, is, for as we write, here lies the deed by which Joab Camp conveys to Jason Fenn (both of the town of Watertown and parish of Northbury), several "pieces or parcels of land, with the dwelling-house and barn standing thereon"—this very house. The date of this deed is the "first day of April, in the year

of our Lord, 1784. and of the Independence of America, the eighth." And Mr. Elam Fenn's friends have often heard him remark that at the time of purchase, the covering of the house was so much impaired, that the new owner deemed it best to remove it, and clapboard the building a-fresh. A portion of that covering then put on—a hundred years ago—still remains in a good state of preservation—white-wood clapboards fastened with wrought-iron nails. (The nails were made by hand, of iron purchased in Sharon, and brought to the vicinity in the form of rods, bent so as to be conveniently carried on horseback.) Red, lovingly, warmly, durably red, is this house, according to the ancient custom of house-painting. Erect and firm it stands, with two-storied front, somewhat modernized in windows and chimney and piazza, but in form without and within much the same as of yore. The long rear roof sweeps toward the ground. For generations the rain has dashed and pattered upon it, while the snug inmates, in childhood, have felt only the comfort of hearing the rain, secure themselves behind the impervious defenses of their social home—in lonely age, have felt more perhaps the resemblance of the storm to the dark, tearful, adversities of life. With low ceilings, divided mid-way by broad, board-cased beams projecting downward, the rooms of this old house stoop toward their occupants in cosy proximity. They brood one as with cherishing tenderness, affecting one, perhaps not as healthfully as the loftier apartments of the present day, but certainly most comfortably,

and when judged in the light of the longevity of our hero—shall we call him?—with not unfavorable sanitary influence. Dear old house, thou dost speak in low tones to us, sometimes sad, ever sweet, of babe and man, of boy and girl, the blooming youth, the busy farmer, and housewife, singing at her work, the numerous, happy family, the merry-making, the marriage, the cheery bustle of the household at morning and at evening, with the glow of candle, lamp, and firelight, of pure, domestic love, and joy, and peace; then of sickness, and of weeping, the farewells for a time and forever, the growing subsidence of life's stir, and the growing prevalence of evening shade and silence. Oh! mute, insensate house, thou dost seem to us like that sister of our human race, deaf, dumb, and blind, yet full of thought and feeling, whose words written, we read, as from behind the veil that separates and yet unites her with us, she declares herself our sister, still. So dear, old house, art thou yet a companion full of stores of warm, living knowledge, to him who has the power of converse with thee.

Under date of Aug. 9, 1877, we find the following lines, written with a trembling hand, in Mr. Fenn's diary (he was then in his eighty-first year): "As I sat in my room to-day, I felt my loneliness, and my thoughts flew back to departed years, when I was surrounded with a large family—wife and children—all busy with work and conversation, which made life so pleasant. Now everything is hushed in silence; the greatest part of them sleep that sleep which knows no

waking, the rest scattered; and I am old, tottering around, waiting for the summons that calls me hence. And may I

'sing, in life or death,
My Lord, thy will be done.'"

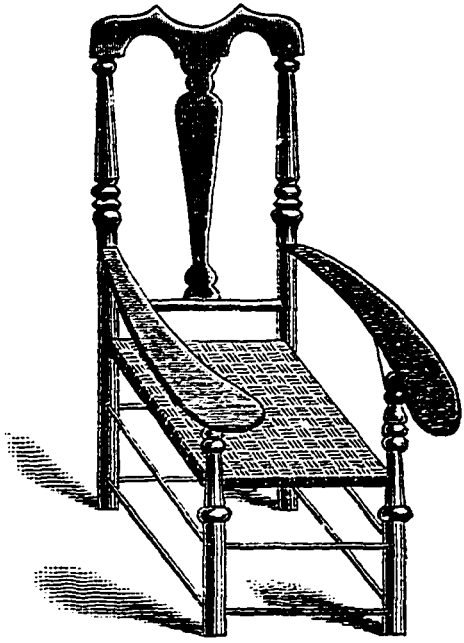
The very trees which stand as sentinels and comrades in the yard, in front of the home, seem to hold their stations by a peculiar right. The tulip that rears its tall form near the left-hand front corner—more than once have we heard the aged man describe the circumstances of its being plucked up by a member of the family, as he was passing through the forest, and brought home, and thrown down on the ground, a mere sprout, to be at length planted here by the same hand which traced the lines we have just read. The maple, also, near the road, which now in summer throws its dense shade far and wide, canopying the hammock suspended underneath, and a broad expanse of green grass—that too, and doubtless many others, was planted by him, of whom, in particular, we write.

Added interest is given to the premises on which this house stands by the fact that the first minister of this town, Rev. Mr. Todd, pastor of the original parish, organized as the Ecclesiastical Society of Northbury, in the town of Waterbury, Nov. 20, 1739, had his home upon them. In a lot on the slope northeast of the house, is the indentation in the ground, which marks the site of his home, now only a depression in the hillside. In 1876, the centennial of our country's independence, an elm tree was planted by one of the pastors

of the town, upon that home-site of the first pastor. At the present time there remains an apple tree—sole relic of an orchard planted in the days of Mr. Todd. A peculiar charm invests the Fenn homestead, in the wide outlook and beautiful panorama which it ever commands. Across the level expanse of the lots which lie in front of it, on the other side of the street, the far-away highlands of the west are visible. Among the last homes of this part of earth, to which the setting sun flashes his evening farewell, is the old house on the hill. But far more extensive, comprehensive, and diversified, is the view to the east. Town-Hill soon declines from the rear of the house, sloping steadily,—yet with some hesitations of level reaches,—towards the valley where lies the village of Terryville—a mingled scene of houses and foliage, and factory walls, and chimney-tops; and central to all and prominent above all, the white tower of the church, where, for nearly fifty years, the subject of our story worshiped. This is the foreground. Beyond lies the wide landscape, swelling and sinking, shading from green to blue, until the sight, flying on its swift wings, touches the horizon soft as the air itself. The line of that horizon is twenty miles or so east of the Connecticut river—distant at least forty miles from the old house on the hill. In the great area between, the signs of man are often seen, the church spire, the fragments of a village, the solitary home, the rising smoke marking factory or passing railroad train.

In this house on the hill was born, the man whose memory

we cherish, and would prolong with greater distinctness and lastingness than the unaided recollection of men might effect. The birth day of Elam Fenn was June 26, 1797. He was the youngest but one, in a family of nine children. His parents were Jason and Martha Potter Fenn. (A genealogical record of the family is found in Appendix A, prepared with as much completeness as circumstances have admitted.) Only on the previous 4th of March had Washington ceased to be President of the United States, being succeeded by John Adams, the second incumbent of that office, for the twenty-first incumbent of which the citizens of the land have just given their suffrages. And it is well to remember, for its possible restraining, and correcting influence upon us in the present, that "at no period of Washington's life was his popularity so materially impaired, as in the last years of his second administration, and nowhere so much as in (his own State) Virginia." This life of our friend stretched out through the period of the administrations of nineteen Presidents of the Republic. He came of a Christian parentage. The old arm-chair which in his age was his favorite seat, located in a corner of the sitting-room, and which, in the skillful hands of a grandson, had beautifully renewed its youth, was invested with sacredness in his eyes. It had been in the family for nearly or quite a hundred years. At either side of it he and a brother used to stand when they were boys, while the father—as priest in his home—ministering at this chair, somewhat as though it were the family altar—prayed morning and



THE OLD ARM CHAIR.

Page 10.

evening—offering the *sacrifice of praise to God continually —that is, the fruit of the lips, giving thanks to His name.* Of the nine children, including our subject, who with their parents composed the home family of that generation, the six younger must have been born in the old house on the hill. Of the three older children—all daughters—the second, Mary, or Polly, as they commonly said in those days, died not long after her marriage to Mr. John Howe, who kept a hotel on Long Wharf in New Haven. "My thoughts fly back seventy-two years ago to-day"—we read in the diary of Mr. Fenn, Sptember 26, 1877. "My father's family was broken. Sister Polly was laid in her grave. And as the years have rolled on, parents, brothers, sisters, wife, and children, and my early associates have left me, and I am still standing on earth almost alone." The wedding scene of the marriage of this sister eighty years before was still fresh in his memory to the last. A relic of that occasion he cherished —a piece of the green silk dress which the bride wore. And a memorable event of his childhood was the responsible duty given him—a little boy of eight years—when the news of the death of this sister in New Haven was received. As the writer was riding with him once in the neighborhood of "One Pine Hill," he pointed out a house to which he was sent on horseback, to inform a sister and her husband living there of the sad event. The people along the way, knowing of the sickness of the absent sister, came out from one house and another to inquire of him what was the intelligence from

her, one woman standing at the door with her hand at her ear to hear more clearly. Can you who read these lines trace the course of the ship over the rolling sea? The flight of the bird through the air? So will the marks of your presence and life on the earth be soon obliterated.

"The long unvarying course, the track
Oft trod, that never leaves a trace behind."

Another entry in the diary of Mr. Fenn, of the date of March 30, 1876, is as follows: "Fifty-eight years ago to-day I followed the remains of my father to the grave. What changes in life's history have taken place since then!" It was his duty to communicate the tidings of the father's death to the absent ones. A reply received from the oldest brother, Gaius Fenn, then living in New York City, is still in possession of the family. It is of date "3d April, 1819." Written in a firm and graceful hand, it is full of filial love and lamentation. Allusion is made to the dying instructions of the departed. "His last words must be remembered." And further on the letter proceeds, "One thing I wish, that we might all of us so improve this affliction as to be prepared for our own departure,—follow him wherein he followed Christ, and at last meet with him in the assembly of redeemed spirits in glory. Be comforted, my dear mother, sisters, and brothers, that we are not left to mourn without hope. Our departed relative, we trust, is now with the multitude that have gone before, in the participation and enjoyment of those blessings, which are in reserve for those that fear God and

live before him. May God in His mercy sanctify this bereavement to each of us, and prepare us for all his dispensations." This letter is specially impressive from the fact, that by the death of Mr. Elam Fenn, to whom it was addressed, and who was the youngest of the family who lived to manhood, the last survivor of the entire family departed this life, and so all have gone to meet that husband and father, "with the multitude" of others, "in the assembly of redeemed spirits in glory." Mr. Gaius Fenn, the writer of the above letter, was a Christian layman of some eminence, whose life was passed mostly in New Haven and New York. In his young manhood he "was led to reflection on his personal need of a Saviour, by being called on in his turn in a prayer meeting to read Burder's Village Sermon on the Conversion of St. Paul, and by some pertinent remarks ensuing, from a member of the church, on the apparent necessity of some such special interposition to convert such a man to Christ. He became a member of the North Church in New Haven, then under the care of his life-long friend, the Rev. Mr. (Samuel) Merwin. Upon his removal to New York, he was transferred to the Rutgers Street Church (Presbyterian), of which Dr. Alexander McClelland was pastor, and was by him ordained a ruling elder, in which capacity he served most successfully, and often and acceptably represented the Presbytery of New York in the General Assembly." Afterward "having relinquished his business, he returned to New Haven, and united with the Rev. Dr. Cleaveland's Church. * * He was

endowed with an excellent and well-stored mind, a clear judgment, and a well-regulated heart. A few occasional pieces from his pen have been published anonymously, including some very sweet hymns, and versions of psalms, combining devotional fervor and fine poetical taste." Retiring to bed on the evening of April 7, 1854, "in apparently usual good health," he had not yet fallen asleep, when his breathing became oppressed, and with an almost instant consciousness that his last hour was come, he calmly committed himself to God, and in a few minutes fell asleep in Jusus." (From an obituary by Rev. Dr. Krebs of New York.) Of the only other brother who lived to years of maturity, Jason Fenn, Jr., it has been said that much the same eulogistic words might be truthfully spoken, as have been quoted above concerning Mr. Gaius Fenn. One sister, Lucy, survived to the year 1879. Her home in the last years of her life was in Springfield, Mass. And there in October, 1877, Mr. Fenn made her a visit, thus realizing a hope long cherished. She was at that time eighty-seven years of age, and he but seven years younger. In an entry in his diary made during this visit he mentioned a hindrance to the free and full enjoyment of his visit in the fact that he was " dumb." The infirmity referred to was the loss of voice, so that he was unable to speak above a whisper. For many of the last years of life he was thus disabled. " I have whispered so long," he writes upon one occasion, " my own voice, should it return, would seem like somebody's else. I do not anticipate making much disturbance that way."

In the little cemetery in Terryville, where the first interments were made, lie the remains of Hon. John C. Lewis, who died in 1849, being at the time Speaker of the House of Representatives in the State Legislature. Toward himself and wife Mr. Fenn entertained a strong affection, both by reason of ties of consanguinity, and also by many acts of kindness by them extended to him. Mrs. Lewis was the daughter of Betsey Fenn, ~~aunt~~ sister of Mr. Elam Fenn, who spent her last days with this daughter. A somewhat amusing incident connects itself with the memory of Mr. Lewis. Among the sympathizing neighbors who called at the old house on the hill at the time of Mr. Fenn's great sickness in his early manhood (of which mention will be made hereafter), was a good woman whose heart was full of tender benevolence. She much desired to go into the sick room. Mr. Lewis and Deacon Milo Blakesley were watching with Mr. Fenn. They thought, as did others, that he could live but a few hours, and were reluctant to admit any one. However, as the visitor urged her request, assuring them she would say nothing, but just take a look at the sick friend, she was allowed to enter. Advancing softly to the foot of the bed, she gazed a few moments with moistening eyes, in what she supposed was the last look, upon her neighbor and Christian brother. Then opening the work-bag which hung upon her arm, she took from it a sprig of fennel, laid it on the bed, and withdrew. The inadequacy of fennel to the sick man's condition so moved the watchers to merri-

ment, that, even then and there, they could not refrain from it, though they knew that the head of fennel was given "in the name of a disciple."

It was, as it were, the old world into which this boy was born.

A man slightly intoxicated said once to the writer: "I orter been born fifty years earlier or fifty years later." Fifty years earlier would have taken him back to the period of which Talleyrand said: "He who had not lived before 1789, did not know the sweetness of living." Talleyrand wrote of France. A sober American of intelligence, born when our subject was, could not have wished himself born earlier. He might be eager to live yet longer, to see the results of the great transitions of his own time. Thus wrote Lord Byron in 1808:

> "Oh nature's noblest gift, my gray goose-quill,
> Slave of my thoughts, obedient to my will,
> Torn from thy parent bird to form a pen,
> That mighty instrument of little men."

And Young had written—

> "Oh for a quill plucked from an angel's wing."

But the fast nineteenth century soon discarded quill, wafer-box, sand-box. They went with the old letter (ſ), used in books before 1800, in all places except the final. And many other things of former use has the nineteenth century put away,—things of the birth-time of this dear boy of silken hairs (here on the table is a lock of it, soft and silken still,

not from the head of the boy, but of the old man of eighty-one years, brown, just a little whitened, like the ground in November, with a trace of snow on it here and there.) Think of the tinder-box, as the sole practical method of kindling a fire,—sparks being struck off by the percussion of flint and steel, and made to fall among tinder, and remember that the first friction-matches, adapted to common use, were made in England in 1827.

The nineteenth century, though striving after a general prohibitory law against intoxicating drink, may have to leave the attainment thereunto to the twentieth century; but at least it has banished strong drink from the New England home. In those early days great orchards were kept for the production of cider. They, and the black mills that made their fruit into cider, have, for the most part, gone to decay. People in those days did not think they had provided for the winter, unless they had from fifteen to twenty barrels of cider in the cellar, capped off with a barrel, or keg, of cider brandy. Some New England rum also they needed, for their own occasional use, and Santa Cruz for the minister and other company. Said Rev. Dr. Noah Porter, in his half-century discourse, delivered in Farmington, Conn., Nov. 12, 1856, "The occasion for it [the temperance reformation] was more urgent than those who have lately come upon the stage can conceive. So lately as 1837, . . . it was found on inquiry . . . that of the hundred and twenty families which had lived in or near the center of the town (of Farmington) for twenty

years previous, more than half had lost a member, or more than one, by death in habits of intemperance, or had one or more still living with them in such habits." "In that house," said Mr. Fenn, pointing out a house still standing, "I have watched, at two different times, with men sick with delirium tremens. One died at the time, the other afterwards from the same cause." A prohibitory law *against* cold water, however, the nineteenth century has expunged, viz.: that which withheld the cooling draught from the patient burning with fever. With this have gone also phlebotomy and calomel.

"I cannot realize this world is the same it was in my boyhood," wrote our friend in his age (April 6, 1877). No! Then the Bible, the hymn-book, the catechism, and almanac, and a few such books as Baxter and Bunyan, made up the home library. Very fond of reading was our friend. Shall we, who knew and loved him, ever forget his familiar appearance, as, donning his spectacles, he turned the late newspaper, or book recently read, to find some passage that had particularly interested him. In Curtis' grand work, "The Life of Daniel Webster," it is said that the great expounder of the Constitution, when a boy, set the house a-fire by a spark of his candle, getting up one night, after a dispute with his brother Ezekiel about a couplet of poetry, at the head of the April page of the almanac. Mr. Fenn never did just that. But another fact, exhibiting the early fondness of the statesman for sacred poetry, was true, in part, of

him. In the book just mentioned, it is said that Mr. Webster stated that he "could repeat the psalms and hymns of Watts at ten or twelve years of age, and that there never was, in truth, a time in his subsequent life, when he could not repeat them" (page 13). To the writer Mr. Fenn remarked once, in his age, that he had, upon a certain occasion, been trying himself, to ascertain how many sacred hymns he could repeat in whole, or in considerable part, and he found the number to be more than one hundred. And it was his practice at times, in the wakeful hours of the night, to recite, in his solitude, these hymns, in the order they assumed, by repeating first one beginning with the letter A, next one beginning with the letter B, and so on through the alphabet.

Now and then, in some back town of New England, the passer-by sees, in the distance, a monumental pile near the roadside. Such an one stands on a high elevation in the town of Burlington. As he comes nearer, its true character appears. It is a massive stone chimney. In its faces at the base are the broad fire-places. The house has fallen in ruins, or perhaps has been taken away, but the back-bone stands erect—the massive chimney. Those chimneys were not made for stoves. Mrs. Minerva Hart, widow of the Rev. Luther Hart of Plymouth, who survived to the year 1882, dying at the age of ninety-two (his cousin, whose boyhood, in its environment, we are endeavoring to picture), informed the writer that her husband bought the first stove used in a dwelling-house in Plymouth, about the year 1814 or '15, not

for purposes of cooking, but to aid the open fire in heating the kitchen. It was a "Philadelphia ten-plate" stove. The cooking was done at the open fire, in the great oven, and in a Dutch oven. The water for washing was heated in a large brass kettle. On the crane hung a pot in which to boil the food. No individual plates were used at breakfast and supper. The food was cut in pieces, and each helped himself from the common dish. A common mug of cider passed around. Pewter plates were used for dinner. Mrs. Hart had the extraordinary furnishing of two carpets at her marriage,—carpets being then almost unknown. There was not a particle of paint, nor of paper, on the interior of the house which became the home of herself and husband, when it came under their control.

Into the home of our boy, a stove was introduced, of the sort above described. Its heat was felt to be oppressive, so much so that the mother fainted. When the pewter plates were first displaced by crockery, the father objected that they would dull the knives. But the pewter went, to be melted down, and transformed into other things of use, or to lie neglected in nooks of darkness, until after the lapse of the larger part of a century, it should be brought out, like the veterans of patriotic wars, to be exalted to strange honor. Mr. Fenn remembered well the first pans for bread brought home by his father, which article previously had been baked on the floor of the great

oven,—tossed in, and falling with a sound which still lingered in his memory. The family made their own cloth —most of it—linen for summer, which they could bleach "white as the driven snow," woolen for winter, dyed black or brown—black with maple-bark, witch-hazel, and a little copperas; and the residue of the dye they boiled down for ink. Their starch they made, and the article which answered for saleratus, and their glue. They did not go to the tailor, but the tailor or tailoress came to them, and remained for days or weeks, making up the cloth into garments. In like manner the shoemaker came, and the leather which had been bought, or tanned "on shares," was manufactured into coverings for the feet. Not every family could afford a clock, at the price of a pair of oxen. As substitutes, there were the hour-glass, which the house-wife turned, to know how long the bread should remain in the oven, and the noon mark within the house, from which to learn the moment of mid-day. Such were the general customs of the people.

Very different is the world of to-day, in the use it makes of art, from that world of our subject's boyhood. Forms of grace, and colors of beauty give embellishment now, as they did not then, to the products of the mechanic and manufacturer, so that the artisan becomes, as to the results of his labor, an artist. Architecture and landscape-gardening, frequently, are made to serve the purpose of throwing the charm of their delightful creations over and around the home. Those still villages and hamlets, where, not the living, but

dead respose, were, in the old times, left to the rudeness of uncultivated nature, unmolested, except as the turf was turned, to be folded down again upon another sleeper in his earthy bed. And upon the sandstone, or headstone of other variety, which marked the grave and commemorated the dead, was the best which mourning love could command, and faith suggest, the coarse image, but a caricature in our view, of an angel's face and wings, or a willow pendent above an urn. Love, and faith, and grief, were the same then that they are now. Then, no less than now, did the heart almost break, with its straining grief. On the margin of the now sunken grave, with its bowing, mossgrown, illegible, headstone, the mourner stood, trembling, sighing, weeping, and looked with anguish upon the disappearance of the object of unutterable love, and turned away with some comfort in the thought that the time of waiting on these shores of earth would not be long. But not then, as now, could affection find solace in beautifying the "sleeping-place" of the dead by the service of art, to express the purity, sweetness, and perennial freshness, of the memory of the departed.

As gradually the streams carry the soil from the hills to the valleys, so population and business tend in the same direction. In the valleys flows the liquid power, which is one of man's great servants. There the lines of transportation lie. The ascent of hills is toilful. Town Hill was once a center of industry. Now along its streets are the homes, at pretty wide remove from each other, of the families, who, for

the most part, own and till its farms. In the old days it called people thither by the shops located here and there, a carpenter's shop, chair-shop, nail-shop, tannery, a factory of hatchel teeth, etc. Once upon it the place was marked, which should be the site of a new meeting-house for the town. In the progress of time, many buildings have disappeared, not to be replaced. It is not strange then, that Mr. Fenn learned with pain, but a few days before his death, of the pulling down of an old house in his vicinity,—a service not often called for, that a man's neighbors should come together, in a friendly "bee"—in the lack of a convenient cyclone—and before nightfall completely demolish his house, from roof-tree to foundation-wall. In Mr. Fenn's mind that house held a place of honor. And as Mr. Rarey, the horse-trainer, dying, left a bequest to secure kind care for old "Cruiser," for what he had been in his associations with him, so Mr. Fenn entertained an affectionate regard for the antiquated, time-riddled building; to him it was hallowed with its ancient glory, when, in the then smartness of Town Hill, companion to the other bright, happy homes, it was elegantly furnished and finished, for the coming to it of the newly-married.

The great outside world has wrought its effects upon Town Hill and its inhabitants; and that outside world has indeed undergone stupendous changes, since the year 1797. It is since that time that mankind have learned how to communicate and to travel with speed, and to transport the articles of commerce with ease.

The magnetic telegraph was first brought into practical use, between Baltimore and Washington, May 27, 1844, when Mr. Fenn had passed considerably beyond the midway mark of his life. We laugh at toll-gates as relics—now hardly ever seen—of a by-gone, benighted age. But it was about 1812, that the turnpike was built through Plymouth by a joint-stock company, with its toll-gates for revenue. Mr. Fenn saw the beginning of the new and great improvement, and its final conversion into a public highway, under the control of the towns traversed by it. The winding track of the old road, of previous use, is now easily traced in some localities, crossing the road on which the Fenn homestead stands a few rods south of its intersection with the main road—the former turnpike. The oldest canals in the United States are those of South Hadley and Montague, Mass., only two or three miles long, on the Connecticut River, both undertaken by a company chartered in 1792. The great Erie Canal, costing seven million six hundred and two thousand dollars, was built in the years from 1817 to 1825, in the young manhood of Mr. Fenn. At about the same time with the completion of the Erie Canal, the first railroad in the world, for the transportation of passengers, was opened Sept. 27, 1825, in England,—the Stockton & Darlington Railroad. The first locomotive, for the transportation of passengers on this side the Atlantic, was built in Baltimore by Peter Cooper, the noble philanthropist, in 1830, and run

by him from Baltimore to Ellicott's Mills. The writer has heard a gentleman tell of going west from Baltimore by the great national road, about that time. He was carried on a railway from Baltimore to Frederick, but the cars were drawn by horses. Steam navigation began in 1807, with the construction and successful operation of Robert Fulton's boat, the "Clermont," making the trip to Albany in thirty-six hours, at the rate of five miles an hour.

Looking particularly at our own country, in the advancement which it has made in these nearly ninety years, we mark, first, its vast territorial enlargement. Exclusive of Alaska, the present area of the United States is almost four times as great as it was in 1797. Then it was eight hundred and twenty-eight thousand square miles. The Louisiana purchase from France in 1803, considerably more than doubled it. Subsequent additions from Spain and Mexico have given it a present expansion, of a little more than three million square miles.

The government of this country was in its beginnings when Mr. Fenn was born. The Federal Constitution went into effect March 4, 1789, whereby the thirteen separate colonies became the United States of America. It was in 1793 that the corner-stone of the national capitol was laid by Washington himself, the site of the city having been selected by him two years before. In his oration at the laying of the corner-stone of the extension of the capitol, July 4, 1851, Daniel Webster described the "Father of his

Country," on that primary occasion: "He heads a short procession over these then naked fields; he crosses yonder stream on a fallen tree; he ascends to the top of this eminence, whose original oaks of the forest stand as thick around him, as if the spot had been devoted to Druidical worship, and here he performs the appointed duty of the day," (Works, vol. II, page 618.) Visit now the city of Washington, and mark the change realized in the lifetime of our friend. To-day, for beauty, and objects and scenes of secular interest, it is hardly surpassed, if equaled, on the globe. Its broad, smooth, and elegant avenues, its extensive parks and multitudinous minor reservations, green with carefully-kept grass and brilliant with flowers, its statues and fountains, its magnificent public buildings, its monument to the incomparable Washington—highest structure of man on the globe,—its suburban Soldiers' Homes, one on the north, where the living veterans of the regular army are cared for, which was founded by Gen. Scott, and is adorned, on a commanding eminence, by an imposing statue of him; another to the west, across the Potomac, on the heights of Arlington, tree-shaded, grassy-sloped, where repose fifteen thousand of the patriot dead who fell in the war of the Rebellion;—contrast all this, and much more, with the wilderness which met the eye of the beholder there, at the birth-time of our subject. Surely there has been amazing development since that day. And this is but a small exponent of the national expansion and transformation, which have taken place. In 1800 the

national government removed to the city of Washington. It was but three years before the birth of Mr. Fenn, that the United States Government first coined money. In those days the Government was yet, as remarked by the great orator on the occasion above referred to, in "the crisis of experiment." The population of the country in 1790 was about three million nine hundred thousand; and the Federal revenue was four million seven hundred thousand dollars. In 1800 the population had risen to about five million three hundred thousand. The population of the six cities of the country in 1800 amounted to but two hundred and ten thousand.

Nine years before the birth of Mr. Fenn, in 1788, the first step towards the settlement of the vast Northwest Territory, including Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, etc., was made. In that year people to the number of twenty thousand, many of them from New England, passed down the Ohio River to settle on its banks, the Indian titles to the country having been lately extinguished by treaty, and the ordinance for the government of the territory having been adopted the previous year, 1787. In 1810, when Mr. Fenn was a boy of thirteen years of age, Illinois had a population of twelve thousand; in 1880 it had a population of three million seventy-eight thousand. A minister, Rev. Cyrus W. Allen, informed the writer that about the year 1830 he went west in the employ of the American Tract Society of Boston, and spent five years traversing Illinois and Missouri.

Chicago was then so unimportant, that he did not think it worth while to go there. St. Louis had then four or five thousand inhabitants, and when he visited it on his evangelizing mission, a man there said to him, "You have brought the Sabbath across the Mississippi River."

An important fact in the mutual relations of people at the present day, is the facility with which they can communicate with each other, through the medium of the post. Every town and village, almost every hamlet, has its post-office. For one cent, one can send a hundred words—if not written too coarsely—from Maine to Oregon. The message will be carried swiftly and surely. When Mr. Fenn was a boy, any message by post, under forty miles, cost, for the transmission of it, eight cents, and so on, upon a rising scale, until for a distance exceeding five hundred miles the charge was twenty-five cents. This was for one sheet of paper. In his earlier years, Mr. Fenn used to go to Farmington for the mail; afterward to Bristol. Whoever went obtained the mail for the vicinity, and the letters were inserted in a tape-holder over the fire-place in the bar-room of the Plymouth tavern, to await the call of the persons to whom they were directed.

When we turn our attention to human activity in the department of philanthropic and religious enterprise, it is doubtless correct to say, from what we there discover, that never has there been an equal period of time since the planting of Christianity in the world, when so much has

been done, in the way of combined, organized effort, to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate, to lift up the degraded, and to propagate the knowledge of saving truth, as in the years since the birth of our friend. Indeed these years constitute a bright era of unparalleled progress of the world, as in temporal prosperity, so also in spiritual. John Wesley had died in 1791. Then the united societies which began with him—now known in this country as the Methodist denomination of Christians, numbered only one hundred and thirty-four thousand members. The Baptist missionary, Carey, went to India in 1793. Foreign missions then had a new birth. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sprang into being in 1810—the birth of the same movement on this continent. "This Society was organized in this town, and at my house," said Rev. Dr. Porter of Farmington, in his Half-Century discourse already alluded to. The Religious Tract Society of London was organized in 1799. The first undenominational tract society in this country arose in 1803, "The Massachusetts Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge." The British and Foreign Bible Society dates from the year 1804; the American Bible Society from 1816. It is several years since the statement was published, that "tenfold more Bibles have been circulated within the last seventy-five years, than within the history of the whole world before."

In the diary of Mr. Fenn, under date of July 29, 1877, is this entry: "How much greater advantages the young have, than I had when I was young. Then no Bible-classes nor Sunday-school." It was in 1782 that Robert Raikes had founded what may be called the institution of the Sunday-school, in Gloucester, England. "When he died, in 1811, there were no less than three hundred thousand children in Sunday-schools in Great Britain alone." The first Sunday-school in the city of Philadelphia, and we know of none earlier in this country, was opened in March, 1791. Not till May, 1824, was the American Sunday-school Union organized. And when this Society applied to the Legislature of Pennsylvania for a charter, the application was met by a remonstrance, which seems to have proceeded from persons connected with one religious sect, on the ground that it was the determination of those who managed the society "to subject the consciences and persons of the free citizens of these United States to the tyranny of an ecclesiastical domination." Rev. Dr. Lyman Beecher, in a sermon preached by him at the installation of Rev. John Keys in the town of Wolcott, in 1814, said: "It is almost unspeakably important that a system of religious instruction, adapted to the age and altered feelings of young people, be provided, to succeed the shorter catechism." This shows that in this region the old method of the "catechism" had not then given way to the new method of the Sunday-

school. And it is said by Rev. Samuel Orcutt, in his history of Wolcott, that this sermon resulted in the commencement of Sunday-schools in that town.

The year 1844, signalized as the initial year of the telegraph, is marked also as the date of the origin of modern Young Men's Christian Associations, which had their rise in a meeting of clerks in a London mercantile house, through the instrumentality of one of the clerks, George Williams by name.

When we consider the character of him, whom this book is designed especially to commemorate, we cannot fail to place a high value on the influences under which this character was formed. And while we could not consent to close up our Sunday-schools, and go back to the old-time use of the catechism, in place of these, and the means of spiritual instruction employed in them, yet we must not make the foolish mistake of casting contempt on the methods of those earlier times, when, as reported, on apparently good authority, in the discourse of Rev. Dr. E. W. Hooker, at the centennial anniversary of the consociated churches in Litchfield County, celebrated at Litchfield, July 7 and 8, 1852, "The catechism was always attended to, at the close of the half-day school on Saturday; and if school was not to keep on Saturday, the catechism was on Friday." The children in Christian families were prepared for this weekly recitation, by instruction in the catechism, given to them at home on the previous Sabbath afternoon.

These facts, by refreshing his memory, may aid the reader in forming some conception—imperfect and inadequate indeed—of the mighty changes in the secular and religious world which were enacted under the observation of the boy and man, Elam Fenn, looking abroad from his well-nigh life-long station on Town Hill. He linked to the present the long past.

Some things of those earlier times may well be remembered, with regret at the loss of them.

Of Rufus Choate, the brilliant advocate of his day, it is said in a published Life of him, that he "retained an instinctive regard for the old ways and practices of his father's house. Though extremely indulgent, he preferred to have his children at home and quiet on a Saturday evening, and engaged in thoughtfulness and serious employments." Was not that practice, which our grandsires observed, of "keeping Saturday night," and indulging in mild relaxation on Sunday evening, far preferable to the present prosecution, with intensity increasing as the week's-end approaches, of business and pleasure, to so late an hour on Saturday night, as to lay, in advance, a heavy and depressing mortgage on the Sabbath? In the old house on the hill, the Sabbath was a guest, to be provided for with forethought and care. Before the sun went down on Saturday night, the week's work must be done, and everything settled to Sabbath quiet and peace. The next morning the family were ready for a deliberate journey to the house of God—those who rode being mounted on horseback—the

man before, the woman on a pillion behind. Seated in the pews of the meeting-house, according to the order assigned to the attendant families, when the room was thus "dignified" once a year (this was true in the boyhood of our subject), they were prepared for the advent of the minister, who came up the aisle bowing to the people on each side, who had risen as he entered. Passing up the stairs to his exalted station in the pulpit, the minister bowed to the occupants of the galleries—those in front of him, and on each side.

Mr. Fenn delighted to describe those far-off scenes. He remembered well Rev. Samuel Waterman, pastor prior to 1810, and sketched him, as his boyish eyes had seen him on the streets of Plymouth, riding swiftly his fleet sorrel mare, wearing his cocked hat, pipe in mouth, and his silk gown fluttering behind. In the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, the publication of which was commenced in 1800, there is an account, from the pen of Mr. Waterman, of a revival in the town of Plymouth, in the year 1799. The closing half of the eighteenth century had been a time of spiritual coldness throughout the land. "Religion was kept in the background." Certain disorders, which followed upon the revivals in which President Edwards and Whitefield had been prominent, had operated to bring all revivals into disrepute. The old French war, and the struggle of the Revolution, absorbed the attention of the people for many years. Subsequently, the organization of the National Government was a subject of universal concern. Men's

minds were pre-occupied. (Discourse of Rev. Dr. Eldridge at the Centennial Anniversary at Litchfield, July 7 and 8, 1852.) But in 1792 a new era of religious awakening opened; and among the instruments honored of God, in blessed revival work, was Pastor Waterman. In the account above mentioned, he speaks of the appointment by himself of an evening lecture, in February, 1799, "which, it is believed, was the first religious meeting, which had ever been publicly notified, or observed in the town."

A further illustration of the difference of the ideas and practices, in the use of social means of grace, prevalent in those times, from those which rule at the present, is given in the discourse by Rev. Samuel Merwin (under whose ministry Mr. Gaius Fenn made profession of religion), preached in the North Church, New Haven, February 25, 1855, "on the completion of fifty years' service in the ministry of the Gospel." He was ordained and installed pastor of the church in the United Society of New Haven—afterwards the North Church—February 13, 1805. Early in his ministry, one "indication of promise" was, that "a few female members of the church were in the habit, the evening after the monthly lecture preparatory to the sacramental supper, of meeting for edification, by reading Scripture and singing hymns, with prayers also, whenever there was any brother present, to lead them in their devotions. So far as can be remembered or ascertained, there was no other gathering of the kind in the city at that day."

It is interesting to observe how, with other changes, the *status* of the minister has changed, since the days of Mr. Fenn's boyhood. With the general division of labor, and the narrowing of the scope of particular industries, the work of the minister has undergone a modification, as has also his office, in the eyes of the people. Then he was, to his parish, its almost sole instructor in religion and morals. And like a teacher of students in theology, he discussed this and that doctrine in series of discourses. Before the writer lies a pile of manuscript sermons, written with exquisite neatness, numbered in the top left-hand corner of each first page,—the first one, "No. 696," the last one, "No. 715,"—twenty sermons—all but two of them of exactly sixteen pages, and these two of exactly eighteen pages each. Each one of them is four inches wide, and six and a half inches long. On the right-hand upper corner, is the date of preaching. The first sermon was preached, April 14, 1801; the last, July 21, of the same year. The entire series is a development of one verse of Scripture, viz.: 2 John, 9. The last two discourses are an "improvement" of the former ones. These sermons were preached by the pastor of a church, or of a town, we might say, in Massachusetts. How would the congregations of to-day relish a series of didactic sermons, on one verse of Scripture, covering the Sabbath mornings of more than three months? But it was no question of relish then. The people were to be thoroughly taught in divine truth. We cannot doubt,

however, that there may have been something a little humdrum in such preaching, even then. A venerable minister of Connecticut, yet living, Rev T. L. Shipman, at the meeting of the General Association (Congregational) of the State in 1877, entered his vigorous protest against the notion, that the ministry of the present day is inferior in power for good, to that of the olden times. "My memory," he said, "goes back seventy years. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I speak one word of intentional disrespect toward my old minister ; but I will say—for the truth requires it—that the preaching of the present day is much better calculated to secure the attention, and awaken the interest, of the hearer, and so do him good. Then the minister preached morning and afternoon, and the old church was a regular dormitory, the people nodding assent, responsive to each other, over the house. I recollect, when a small boy, asking my father, while the minister was preaching, whether he had not almost got to "once more," according to the stereotyped form of drawing to an end. My aunt looked at me in such a manner, as most effectually to reprove and silence me. There is far less of mannerism now, in the making of sermons, than then." The pastor of Mr. Fenn, from 1810 to 1834, was Rev. Luther Hart. It was under his ministry, that Mr. Fenn confessed Christ, and became a member of the church in Plymouth, in 1815. Mr. Fenn remembered well the ball, by which the ordination of Mr. Hart was celebrated by the people of the town, and described the appear-

ance, on that occasion, of her—how she looked as she came into the room—who subsequently became Mrs. Hart. Quite a belle she then was. Away from home, at school in New Haven, she returned, to be present at the interesting event, of the settlement of a new pastor. To the writer, Mrs. Hart has expressed her very strong questioning—if not denial—of the correctness of the description, in the autobiography of Dr. Beecher, of the disgracefully free use of strong drink upon that occasion, of the ordination of Mr. Hart. Mr. Hart himself was a man of superior ability, improved by education, and of deep piety. His essay, in the form of a "letter to a friend," published in 1818, with the title "Plain Reasons for Relying on Presbyterian Ordination," gives proof of his logical powers, and his scholarship. The *Quarterly Christian Spectator*, into which the *Christian Spectator* was changed in 1829, was the organ of theologians, who were favorable in general, to the views of Rev. Dr. Taylor, of New Haven. Mr. Hart was reckoned of that school. And in the September number, 1834, issued after his death, these words are found, having reference to him: "There is scarcely any one, on whom we had more depended, to enrich our future numbers." Said one, of him, "I always found it impossible to be long with him, without feeling myself to be in the presence of a great and good man; and yet, with his friends, as is well known, he often manifested the playfulness and simplicity of a child." There lies before the writer a little brown book, on the fly-leaf of which, with some youthful flourish of

the capital letters, is the inscription: "Elam Fenn's Book, August 20, 1815." It is the Life of that sweet saint, Harriet Newell. She had died at the Isle of France, in November, 1812, the first offering from this land of a completed life to the cause of foreign missions. And when this "Life" appeared, Mr. Hart occupied the time of four evening meetings, in the school-house (still standing) near the Fenn home, in reading this volume. Much did Mr. Fenn say, and ever with evidence of affectionate veneration, of Mr. Hart;—how, upon one occasion, having called the members of the church together, and summoned them to new consecration, he exclaimed "I want you all to run up with me now to the gate of heaven," that is, in prayer, for the reviving of religion in the community. His was a ministry of revivals; and it was in connection with such a season of special labor, that he became the victim of fatal sickness.

There were many noble ministers in the vicinity of Plymouth, to whom it was Mr. Fenn's privilege to listen in his early years. Mr. Mills of Torringford, father of the noted missionary, Mr. Samuel J. Mills, Jr., Mr. Porter (afterward Dr. Porter) of Farmington, Mr. Hallock of Canton, Dr. Beecher of Litchfield. Of the latter, he had vivid memories. Dr. Beecher began his ministry in Litchfield, the same year that Mr. Hart was ordained in Plymouth. When he first appeared on exchange in the church at Plymouth, as he ascended the pulpit, one woman in the congregation, judging according to the appearance, is said to have remarked to

another, *sotto voce*, "no great things to-day!" What she said later, if anything, we know not. It may serve as an illustration of the power which Dr. Beecher sometimes wielded in preaching, to mention an incident, related to the writer by Rev. Dr. Henry Little of Indiana. He was much associated with Dr. Beecher in work for the Divine Master, in the years from 1832 onward, after Dr. Beecher became President of Lane Theological Seminary at Cincinnati. Both were present, on a certain occasion, at a Presbyterian camp-meeting in a locality near the Ohio river. One day late in the afternoon, Dr. Beecher said: "Bro. Little, you must preach to-night." Mr. Little had not expected to do so, but walking out, away from the company, his mind was soon directed to a subject, and a train of thought thereon, and returning, he gave Dr. Beecher an affirmative reply to his request. Accordingly, in the evening, Mr. Little preached. As soon as he had finished, Dr. Beecher addressed the audience with marvelous power. The text was, "The Harvest is past, the Summer is ended, and my soul is not saved." A mighty effect was produced. Scores of persons were brought to the Saviour that night. As a result of that camp-meeting, a church was organized, and a meeting-house was built on the very spot of the camp-meeting. And years afterward when Dr. Little visited the church, one of the members of it conducted him out to a certain tree, and said: "I stood by this tree, that night, and when Dr. Beecher was describing the danger of the sinner, I seized this tree, and held on, afraid of falling, then, into perdition."

Mrs. Hart used to tell an amusing incident, illustrative of Dr. Beecher's liability to unpunctuality. Her husband and herself were sitting quietly at their table one day, when Dr. Beecher came unexpectedly; entering with his customary vigor, he exclaimed, "Well, I am in time once," referring to a ministers' meeting, he had come to attend. "Yes," said Mr. Hart, rising to welcome him, "and just one week ahead of time."

In a fragment of a diary kept by Mr. Fenn in 1831, we read in an entry, made April 27th, of that year: "Attended meeting, heard Mr. Camp, of Northfield." This was an estimable minister, Rev. Joseph E. Camp, who preached for many years—his time of settlement was forty-two years—in one of the highest churches of the land, conspicuous as a moral light-house far and near, in the parish of Northfield, in the town of Litchfield. It is of this minister the story is told, that being on an exchange in the parish of Wolcott—also an elevated region, and somewhat rocky—he gave out the hymn beginning,

"Lord what a barren land is this,
That yields us no supply,"

when the chorister, naming the tune, as was the custom, for the information of the choir, called out rather loudly "Northfield."

In Walter Scott's story of Kenilworth, Lambourne is made to say, "When I was a youth, I had some few whimsies of conscience, but I rubbed them partly out of my recollection

on the rough grindstone of the wars, and what remained I washed out in the broad waves of the Atlantic."

Our subject, also, when a youth, felt the remonstrances of conscience; but he did not finally rub nor wash them out. And one reason was the wise care extended to him by faithful, pious parents. As the writer stood with him, by the grave of his mother, in the old cemetery at Plymouth Center, May 15, 1876, he gave the following bit of his history: While he was yet a youth he formed an intimacy with a young man, who lived in the portion of the town near to the parish of Northfield, who seems to have been another such affectionate spirit, as was Mr. Fenn. They loved each other, and so much, that at one time (if memory does not mislead, it was as they sat by the fire-place in the Sabbath-day house), the other said, "Let us make a covenant, as David and Jonathan did." These youthful friends—about sixteen years of age—agreed to meet on a Thanksgiving evening, at a hotel in Plymouth Hollow, to visit together. As the evening came on, our subject prepared to go. His mother asked, "Where are you going, Elam?" He told her. She objected.

He explained to her the circumstances. But notwithstanding all that he said, she could not give her consent to the carrying out of the plan. However, as night came on, he slipped out of the house, threw the saddle on a horse, and was off; met his friend, had a good visit with him, doing nothing immoral or improper, in itself. And yet,

conscience was not quiet. He returned home. The next morning, at breakfast, his mother said, "Where did you go last night, Elam?" "To the tavern in Plymouth Hollow, to meet my friend." She was a wise and good mother. She said nothing, but rose from the table, went to the hearth, drew out a black coal from the ashes, and with it made a mark on the beam overhead—one black mark—and threw the coal back into the ashes. Nothing was said, but there was the black mark; and there it stood. Every time he came into the room, he saw it. It had a voice, which pierced his soul with bitter, humbling reproach. After about eight days, the mark disappeared. Then he knew he was forgiven. Afterward he learned that his mother had been informed, erroneously, in his opinion, that the house to which he and his friend resorted was disreputable. That was the only instance he remembered, of disobeying that good mother. "And now," he said, "I would gladly lie down upon her grave, and ask her forgiveness, if that would do any good."

In the determination of personal rectitude, he came into collision with the customs of society; and we can see that had he finally yielded, in those early days, to what, he was convinced, was not right for him, instead of bringing forth fruit to God's praise in old age, and being spiritually fat and flourishing, he would have been like the unproductive heath, planted in the desert. To some extent, then, as now, there were scruples in the

Christian breast, concerning the amusement of dancing. A ball was to occur, in those days of his young manhood. If a certain young friend—who afterwards became his wife—should attend it, he wished to do the same. The voice within spoke out imperatively—the voice of duty—God's voice in the soul—saying: "Thou shalt not." Alone in his room, he wept. But he could not, at least he would not, say, "No, I will not go." He went. The custom was to gather about three o'clock in the afternoon, and disperse about midnight. He came away at 10 o'clock, and as he withdrew from the place, resolved that he would never attend another gathering of the kind; and he kept his vow, and that was his last participation in that form of social amusement.

In the older, original cemetery of Terryville—already alluded to—lie buried the mortal remains of two men, who bore the name of Eli Terry—father and son. About the year 1823, the younger man commenced a business of manufacturing, in the locality where now is Terryville. From him, as its founder, the village derived its name. He was then a young man. In his boyhood days, he was a schoolmate with Elam Fenn, being very nearly of the same age with him. And in their boyish conferences, young Terry made known to his friend, Fenn, that his father, Eli Terry, Sr., was at work at home, in a room from which others were excluded, endeavoring to invent a clock. The result of those efforts, was a clock that could stand on a

shelf, rather than on the floor. Thus, in the immediate vicinity of our subject, when he was a boy, in his secluded home in a country town, lay the fountain-head of the great American industry of clock-making. By the invention referred to, effected in 1814, the clock ceased to be the stately, ponderous, costly, and rare article, it had formerly been, and gradually, but rapidly, came to be a universal possession, in the homes of the land. (A full account of the relation of Mr. Eli Terry, Sr., to the art of clock-making in this country, is given in Johnson's Encyclopedia.)

We sometimes see a calendar, in which the days of special significance in the year are marked by peculiar coloring, as Jan. 1st, Feb. 22d, July 4th, etc. Frequently, in the diary of Mr. Fenn, the passing day is noticed, as the anniversary of some great event of his personal, or domestic, history. There is such an entry under date, Nov. 5, 1876: "I have attended church this morning, and once more sat down at the table of the Lord, to commemorate the dying love of Jesus. I was forcibly reminded of a similar gathering in Plymouth Center, sixty-one years ago to-day, when I stood up with others, and took the vows of the Lord upon me—professedly gave up myself to the Lord, believing my vows were recorded in heaven. I now ask myself, where are those that witnessed that transaction? Passed over Jordan's cold stream. I, then the youngest of that large church, remain. Were I to visit that church to-day, I should find but one there, that was there then. When I sat down

to the table of the Lord to-day, were the roll called, I should have been the oldest to respond." It was, then, at the age of eighteen years, that our subject made profession of his faith in Christ, by becoming a member of a Christian church—the youngest member of that church. That the reception of young persons to membership was not as common then, as now, appears from the following statement in a letter, written by Rev. T. L. Shipman (whose words have been quoted already), referring to ancient times of his recollection. "When Harriet W. Lathrop, just in her teens, joined the church at Norwich Town, it was a matter of observation and conversation, an unheard of event." How striking and beautiful the comparison and contrast, suggested by the fragment from the diary of Mr. Fenn, given above! Once the youngest in a large church, espousing the cause while yet in his youth, and, more than half a century later, still at his post—not in the same church exactly, for the church in Terryville, of which Mr. Fenn was a member the latter half of his life, was a branch from the church in Plymouth—yet in this, his later ecclesiastical home, the oldest one present at the Lord's Supper, and one of the oldest in the church. His connection with the church, her ministers, her membership, her ordinances, was close and vital, in the earlier, as well as the later years. The Holy Scriptures began then to dwell in him richly. He became exceedingly well-versed in them, so that the halting memory

of one, who might attempt unsuccessfully in his presence to quote from the sacred volume, he generally could prompt. From those early years, his aims were heavenly. He learned then to trust in God, and to hope in Him; and when, later, adversity beat heavily upon him, he was not swept away, but still, through the darkness and storm, shone the serene ray, of his gentle patience, and steadfast faith.

"O how often," he said, looking back on life from near its close, here below, "we drank the bitter cup, over and over again, but our kind Father gave us strength to do it."

MID-DAY.

On the 13th of February, 1816, Elam Fenn and Lydia Atwater were married. She was the daughter of Timothy Atwater. It was a happy alliance. Her home was in a large house three-quarters of a mile to the South, still standing, a good mate, with its generous proportions and wide outlook, to the Fenn homestead. This was a youthful marriage indeed. Certainly, in this instance, the modern idea did not rule, that a man must first make ample provision to support a wife, before taking one, as though she were to be carried through life; as when, on the cars, a passenger without a seat, looking sharply at one by the side of a young lady, and being about to take it, was told by her, that the seat was engaged by a gentleman. "And where is his baggage?" "I am his baggage," replied the young lady. Lydia married Elam, not to be his burden, but his helpmate. It was never the good fortune of the writer to know Mrs. Fenn. But his lack of personal knowledge, and consequent inability to speak from acquaintance of her character and life, while a matter of regret to himself, is abundantly supplied to this volume, by a

tribute from one well qualified by familiarity and affectionate regard, to portray her truly and worthily. Thus writes her grandson, Colonel Augustus H. Fenn of Winsted:

"To those who knew them best, it is not easy to think of grandfather and grandmother apart. They were not made to be apart, but together. They were not twain, but one flesh. They came together by natural selection. God joined them, and even in thought we cannot put them asunder. Each alone would have been imperfect and incomplete. Together they were perfect and complete. If he, in his feebleness of health, was less than the oak, by so much was she more than the vine. If he, through the ministry of suffering, expanded upward in leaf and flower, she, through her toil, drove deep the sustaining roots into the mother earth. If he aided her in making the family life beautiful, she helped him make it possible. She came of Pilgrim stock. She was a daughter of the Puritans, and she kept their creed. It was hers by inheritance; it coursed in her veins; it dwelt in her blood. Integrity was as natural as life. She was first pure. She loved the truth. She hated a lie. She remembered the Sabbath day, and kept it holy. She was temperate, abstemious, unselfish. She thought first of her family, then of her friends and neighbors, and last, if ever, of herself. To her every moment of time, every atom of resource, was a trust to be accounted for; and carefully the account was kept; faithfully the trust performed. To her, waste was sin, and with that rare economy of perfect saving and perfect use, the oil

by miracle restored in the widow's cruse, could scarce outlast her basket and her store. Though children sometimes seemed more freely sent than bread, the children were accepted as blessings, and the bread was found.

"And what a perfect trust was hers. Though like Martha cumbered with much serving, like Mary she daily sat at the Master's feet. Though every morning she took up the burdens of the day, and bore them to its close, every evening she came, weary and heavy laden, and found the promised rest. As one by one came trials, sickness, death, how firm she stood, how calm! She knew in whom she trusted, and she trusted to the end. And so, with every emergency of life serenely met, with every duty well performed, in the evening of her existence there came a quiet afternoon, when, with prophetic words, she placed her undone knitting in those weak hands, which she had strengthened, and taking that strong hand on which she leaned in hers, she went to rest. And when at midnight, they whom she had borne looked on her, as she lay, her fingers, that no more should toil or tire, laid peacefully upon her peaceful breast, she was not dead, but slept."

Substantially the same testimony is borne by the eldest son, who writes of "the almost miraculous preservation in health of our dear mother—her tender care, and almost unceasing toil, with quite a family of little ones, in moderate circumstances, with consequent privations." As we attempt to delineate Mr. Fenn, following the course of his experience,

it is with the thought also of that devoted companion, who, in the picture of the old home, is seen sitting near him, and who, for fifty-seven years, in loving faithfulness, shared with him the joys and sorrows of life.*

Much of the time a rose-bush is but a bramble—a shrub—with little to distinguish it above its fellows; but seen when it is in bloom, what peculiar beauty adorns it then, in the house-yard, by the road side! Yet ever it has had the rose in it—has been a rose-bush. So there are people, lost among the mass of mankind, till the exigency of trial comes. Sickness, or some of the many forms of earthly trouble, assails the person, the family, the neighborhood, and the undistinguished one blossoms out, in beauty of resignation, courage, resolution, labor, sympathy, counsel, help. The qualities which have endeared Elam Fenn, to those who knew him intimately, are such as have special exercise in adversity. While yet in his earlier manhood, approaching the midway point of life, through over-exertion upon a certain occasion, his health was irreparably broken. He was wont to say, that since that time, he had never seen a well day. Around him was a family of young children, dependent on his care and support, when prostrating sickness laid its paralyzing and distressing hand upon him. His case baffled the skill of the best physicians. To the pain of his disease was added the pain, almost intolerable at times, of the severe medical treatment to which

* The picture referred to is the older view, taken some years ago, which, in a portion of the copies of this work, is replaced by a view taken very recently.

he was subjected. "I felt many times that I would be glad to crawl away into a fence corner, and die." For two or three years his sufferings were great. As he looked at his dismal earthly prospects, and the wants of his dear family, he was an illustration of the sentiment of Schiller's "Wallenstein,"

> "A bitter and perplexed 'What shall I do?'
> Is worse to man than worst necessity."

Before him sickness, large expenses, no revenue; in the end, perhaps, death for himself, and destitution for his family. But he looked not only before, he looked also above. "If any man will do His will," said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." In other words, if you take God at His word, obey and trust Him, you shall find His declarations true. More than forty years subsequent to this time, Mr. Fenn wrote — it was the demonstration of his own experience—"I believe, if I come to Christ in simple faith, as a little child comes to his earthly father, and ask good things, I shall have them granted some way —perhaps not in the way I expected; for God knows best how and when to answer prayer." One instance in particular abides in the memory of the children, of prayer to the Heavenly Watcher for relief, when "the vision seemed to change," and the assured suppliant said, "Help will come." It did come, very soon, in the reception of a considerable sum of money from that noble brother Gaius, of whom some sketch has already been given. Helpers appeared in other

kind brothers and sisters, both of the name of Fenn and Atwater, and in various persons outside the immediate relationship.

As once the writer was riding with Mr. Fenn, by the place now owned and occupied by Mr. Thomas Keefe, he said, "In that place I passed five years, the happiest of my married life. That was before sickness and death came into our family."

Here is the fragment of a diary of the year 1831, of the months of March and April. The paper is scant, and "in the sere and yellow leaf." The entries are brief—brief like the compressions of the telegraph. The first entry we insert will interest old residents of Plymouth and Terryville:—

"March 9th. I went over to Mr. Thomas' factory" (originator of the world-famous Seth Thomas clocks). "In the P. M. I went . . . to Terry's factory. At night I watched with Elizabeth.

"12th. . . . Antoinette broke out with the canker-rash.

"13th. Staid from meeting on account of Antoinette's illness.

"14th. Staid in the house with Antoinette. Very sick.

"15th. The child no better.

"16th. The little sufferer departed.

"17th. We attended the funeral of our dear child.

"April 23d. We went to meeting. Had dear little Antoinette's death mentioned. So fades the lovely flower." And what a fit custom was that, which lingered so long in the churches, that our memory recalls it, when the minister,

before prayer, upon occasion, read such a request as this: "Mr. and Mrs. Elam Fenn, having been bereaved of a dear child, ask the prayers of the church in their behalf, that this affliction may be sanctified to their present and everlasting good." We spoke of the conciseness of the items in the diary. A sigh, a groan, is soon uttered. These pen-marks of fifty years ago seem not to indicate a deep emotion. But to him who can read between the lines, they are surcharged with parental agony of grief. In the intimacy of Christian friendship, this afflicted father once unfolded, in part, to the writer, the detailed story of that early bereavement. The deceased was a beautiful child of two and a half years. After the day's work was done, and the father came in, and sat down, he was always "interviewed" by the little prattler, climbing up into his lap, and blessing him with the demonstrations of her sweet affection. And when, forever, the darling child was withdrawn, the heart rose up at times in masterful, vain, longings for the solace of her presence and love. One night, giving rein to his feelings, the father went out into the darkness, and walking rapidly down the road, and on and on, a mile and more, passed through the village street, by store and tavern, by the church, spurred by irrepressible affection, to the old burying-ground, church-yard still, and picking his way among the graves, came to the little mound which marked the sleeping-place of his child; and again was heard that cry, which "was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping," when "Rachel, weeping for her children,

refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Ah, it has ever been a pitiful sound; and was it not indeed that night, in the hush of Plymouth church-yard, when that father-heart must vent the longing love, it could not hold in silence,—"Oh, my darling, I cannot give you up. Come back! Come back!" Even the Divine Father exclaimed over his wayward children, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" In the soul of Mr. Fenn, the love which God implanted was tender and strong. It was not in rebellion against his Heavenly Father, that this earthly father gave voice to his great affection and grief, on that woful night, at the grave of his child. There was a bond which held him united to his God. Afflictions may speed one on his way toward heaven, or carry him off into sin and darkness, accordingly as he holds fast to God or not; even as, in some parts of our country, ferry-boats are propelled across the streams by the force of the current, being held by a rope or cable, fastened to some point higher up the stream. The force which would carry them directly down and away, is made, by means of another resisting power, to carry them on, and across the river, to the desired destination. "We shall not have one pain, nor disappointment, nor trial, more than our Heavenly Father sees best we should have." These words are but one form, among very many, in which our friend was accustomed to express his faith in the Heavenly Father. "My Heavenly Father" was a phrase often on his lips. Let an entry in his diary late in life, March 16, 1876, come in here, in juxtaposition with the narration of the fact of affliction, just given:

"Forty-four years ago to-day we experienced our first great sorrow. Our family circle was broken. Lydia Antoinette, our little darling, was taken from us. With bleeding hearts we laid her beautiful casket away. Forty-five years have come and gone. Oh, how often death has knocked at our door since, and borne off a loved one, one after another, until my number of ten children is reduced to four. The companion of my youth has paid the debt of nature, too. I can but feel sadness come over me to-day; but I strive to look up to my Heavenly Father, and leave my burdened soul with him, and rest in the hope, that through Christ, in his own good time, I shall be re-united with them in heaven, whom I so tenderly loved on earth, all redeemed by the blood of Christ, and all join together in a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, while eternity rolls on forever and forever."

One of the six children who preceded him to the world beyond, was his son, Albert Potter, born February 4, 1826. He died at the age of nineteen years. When this son was about ten years old, it became necessary that he should undergo a formidable surgical operation. As the result of a sore upon one of his limbs, the local physician decided that the bone must be removed. A surgeon from abroad, Dr. Hooker of New Haven, was obtained. That was before the discovery and application of the means of inducing anæsthesia, for the honor of which, three eminent members of the medical profession have contended, as seven cities disputed the honor of having given Homer to mankind. We may well pause at

the statue of Dr. Wells in Bushnell Park, and give thanks to God, that He permitted him, or any one, to confer such a boon upon the suffering world, as to wrap the body in peaceful insensibility, when otherwise it would, of necessity, undergo indescribable torture. In anticipation of the dreaded operation, Mr. Fenn had said to himself, "How can I witness it? I cannot, I cannot." And he had planned in his own mind, to go out, after all was ready, and retire to the lower part of the meadow in the rear of the house, within call, but far enough removed, to be beyond the hearing of the cries of his suffering child. He went in, and talked with Albert, with enforced equanimity, and sat down in the room with his back toward the physicians, as they laid out their instruments, and made their preparations; when the boy, lying on the bed, said, "Pa." "What is it, Albert?" "I want you to be in the room, when the operation is performed." In describing the event, Mr. Fenn said, "I felt as though I should sink"—for he was but a feeble invalid himself. But he replied, "Oh yes, certainly." In a few minutes Albert's trembling heart reached out to his father again, "Pa, I want you to come and lie down by my side." "I looked up to God, and went." It was, of course, a fearful ordeal for both son and father, and constituted one of the great trials which God permitted to come upon his servant. The scene illustrates the domestic sympathy and help, that went forth from, and were expected of, him. And the fiery trial aided no doubt, under God, in refining away the dross, and

imparting its purity, and brightness, to the finally sanctified spirit. As the son Albert looked to his father, and not in vain, in the bitter hour, so did that father look up to God. When, in his hearing, the story was told, of the man, and his little daughter who wakened in the night, and was afraid, and said tremblingly, from the crib at the bedside, "Papa, take hold of my hand;" and the father, just then in perplexity and distress of mind, was thus led to say, "Father, take hold of my hand;" "I have thought of that a hundred times," said Mr. Fenn, "and said, Father, take hold of my hand."

Mention has been made already of the fact, that Albert died at the age of nineteen years. Five years subsequent to his death, in 1850, a beloved daughter, Antoinette, the second child of that name, passed away, at sixteen years of age. Till lately, there stood a little red school-house by the road-side, in what is now district No. 4, of the town of Plymouth, where she taught school for a term, but a short time before her death. Both of these children, going to the grave in youth's prime, went in the bright hope of the Christian. Another daughter, Harriet, the wife of Dr. Salisbury, departed this life in the same year, 1850; a son, Lucius Augustus, in 1859; and another son, Gaius, in 1872.

Writing of the birth-day of a daughter, Mr. Fenn said: "We rejoiced over her advent, and gave her to God, and she still lives, with three others of our dear number, while six of our branches have been cut off, and the mother of my children has gone to eternity. God has been good to spare me

four of my children. What a comfort they are to me in my old age. They all, with their companions, profess to be the followers of Christ." This word of his is here introduced, to intimate how effective for good, upon the children in a family, by God's blessing, is the Christian life of the parents. And so in those mid-day years, when our friend was compelled to restore to Him who had bestowed them, some of the choicest treasures of his heart and his home,—not only the infantile pet, but those who had come, or were coming to be his companions and supports,—his heart was comforted by the fond hope of that world, where his *children would be as aforetime.* "Thirty-one years ago this morning," he writes in his diary, May 10, 1876, "Albert died. How vividly it is presented to my mind to-day,—his dying farewell to us all, his peaceful and triumphant entrance into the dark valley, with the hope of an immortal waking with his Saviour. How hard it is, when bending over a dying child, to say, 'Father, thy will be done.' Even David, the man after God's own heart, cried out, 'O Absalom.' I think I have felt the same repeatedly, but after all, I think I gave them all up to God, and kissed the rod, and bowed down at the foot of the cross, and said, 'Thy will be done, O Lord.'

"'Hope looks beyond the bounds of time,
When what we now deplore,
Shall rise in full immortal prime,
And bloom to fade no more.'"

Having, through sickness and its consequences, incurred

a debt, it became his duty, in the judgment of Mr. Fenn, about the year 1846, to go to New York, and work in the factory of his brother, who was a manufacturer of articles of pewter. "Fenn's faucets" are still a well-known utensil. For several years he spent most of his time thus, in separation from his home, till the object in view was fully realized. Meantime, the good wife presided in the domestic world of the old house on the hill. It was upon his return to New York, from a visit at home, during this period, that a very serious accident befell him, in connection with which, his recognition of the Divine Providence over him appears. He was riding on the top of the stage, which was rolling along on the road between Bristol and Plainville, a few rods east of the present school-house of District No. 5, in Bristol, when an axle broke. It was in the month of March, the 12th day,—a cold morning, with ice at the road-side. He was thrown violently on the frozen ground and ice. His left foot and limb were so caught that the leg was broken, the ankle was dislocated, and the foot crushed, the sole of the shoe being torn off. So serious was this disaster, that he was laid aside by it until fall. In the interesting autobiographical accounts with which, in conversation, he used to favor his friends, he said of this occurrence, that his thought immediately was, "Thou, Lord, hast done this." God's hand, he did not doubt, was in the event. He was confident that God had a good end in view, in permitting him to suffer in such a way. And one of his statements,

worthy of a place among the grandest deliverances of God's heroes, was this: "I would rather walk with God in the dark, than in the light alone."

Before the writer lies a little paper-bound book of 198 pages, entitled, "The American Physician, and Family Assistant, in Four Parts, by Elias Smith, Physician. Boston: 1832." On the inside of the cover is a wood-cut portrait of Dr. Smith, "Born June 17, 1769." One compares this little flexible book, not much larger than a pocket diary, with the stately octavos and quartos of corresponding works of the present. In size, it is nothing in comparison. But, upon turning the leaves, one finds evidence of a mind ahead of its time in true progress, in some particulars at at least; as, for example, the book closes with a rhymed objurgation of the use of calomel, the last two verses of which are:

"Physicians of my former choice,
Receive my counsel and advice;
Be not offended though I tell
The dire effects of calomel.

"And when I must resign my breath,
Pray let me die a natural death,
And bid you all a long farewell,
Without one dose of calomel."

To this physician, using only vegetable medicines, Mr. Fenn applied, after his sickness, to which we have already alluded, had been unsuccessfully treated by neighboring practitioners. The writer remembers hearing a worthy

citizen of the country hold forth, somewhat excitedly, in town-meeting, more than thirty years ago, who avowed himself to be, and always to have been, a "Thompsonian Democrat." Made aware of his mistake, by the laughter of his auditors, he withdrew the novel, and medicinal designation, by which he had described his democracy, and said he intended to call himself a "Jeffersonian Democrat." Dr. Smith seems to have used the Thompsonian treatment, truly so called, and to have been of benefit to his patient. At one of his visits, he brought with him a medical student, Samuel T. Salisbury, who remained in Plymouth, became established in medical practice, married the eldest daughter of Mr. Fenn, lived to old age, and died ten years before his patient. It may have been due to his connection with Dr. Smith, that Mr. Fenn became extraordinarily well-informed in the nature and properties of plants. Never till his acquaintance with Mr. Fenn, did the writer have the opportunity presented to him, to learn in a homely, practical way, the names and virtues of the wayside plants. But Mr. Fenn knew them; and it almost seemed as though the plants knew him. To the writer they have a different aspect from that which formerly they bore—the aspect of a mutual friend—queen of the meadow, and trumpet-weed, yarrow, lobelia, and the rest, so far as by memory's aid they come back again, in answer to the roll-call.

Mr. Fenn took pleasure, in winter, in watching the

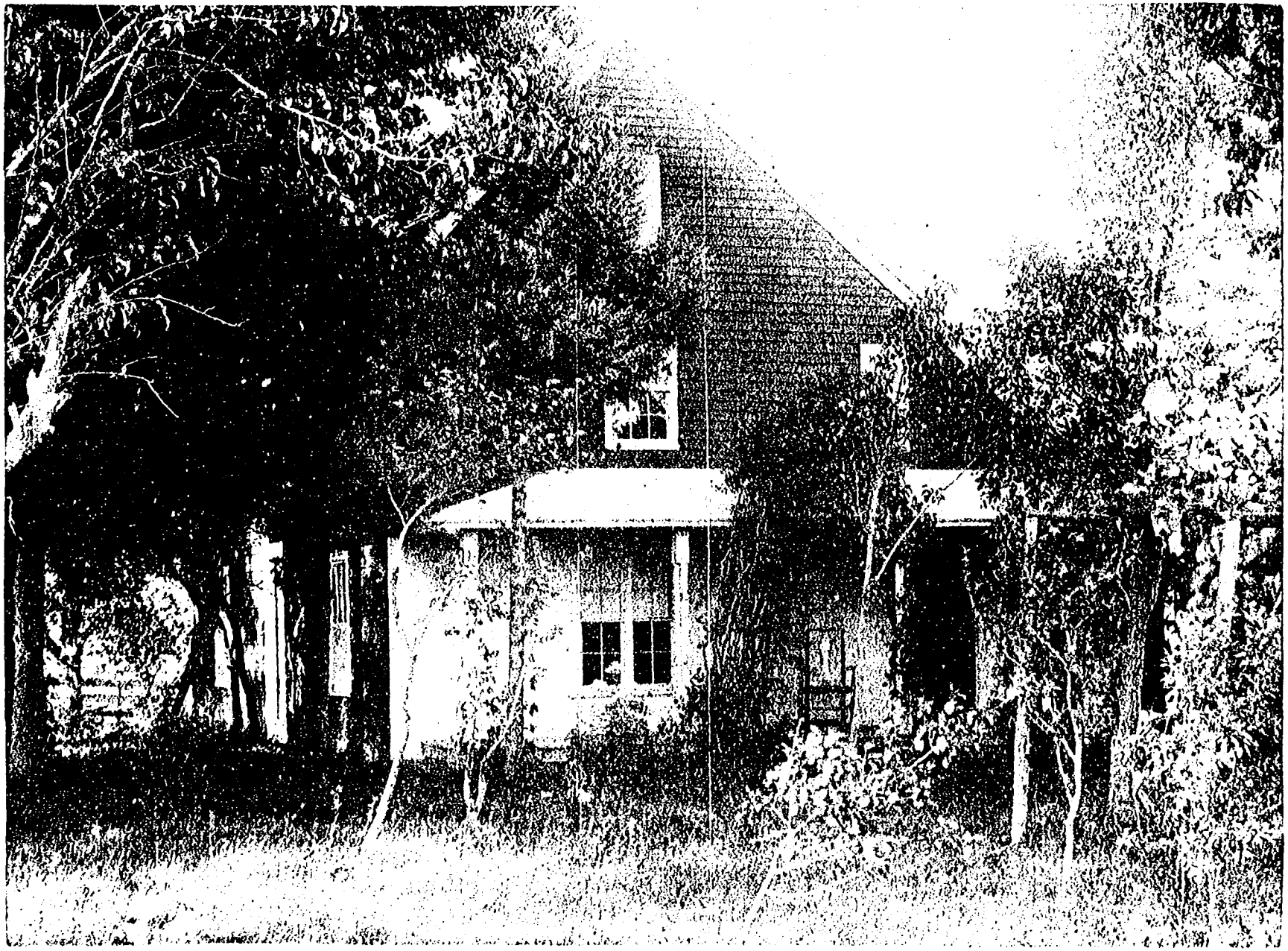
squirrels, and the bluejays, and other birds, partaking of the free repast which was set out for them, on a little shelf, high up, at the outer side of the porch of the old house on the hill. Between him and the natural world, there seemed to be a good understanding. It is himself, indeed, who writes in his diary, in the cold and blustering month of March: "Soon the balmy days of Spring will come; the earth be wrapt in beauty; the grass spring up; the flowers open their petals; the birds warble their carols; all nature rejoice in the beneficent Creator." To him, and such as he, the beautiful lines of the poet, Cowper, were designed to apply:

"His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers; his t' enjoy
With a propriety which none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And, smiling, say, 'My Father made them all!'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind,
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love,
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds, a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"

Will not the time come, when there will be introduced into our schools, more of the direct exploration of objects, in the various departments of Nature's wide empire; when the child shall have his attention turned, more than now,

to the common creatures of God, about him—the plant, the animal, the soil, the stone, the air, the sun, the star; when he shall look more widely, and particularly, into the wonders of his own structure and being?

It remains to say, of the mid-day period of the life of our friend, that when the growth of the village of Terryville reached such a stage, as to make it apparently desirable and best, that a church should be organized in the community, he was one of the original forty-nine—fifty save one—who withdrew from the church at Plymouth Center, to unite in forming the new organization. To the pastor of that church, Rev. Ephraim Lyman, he was warmly attached. And with the first pastor of the Church in Terryville, Rev. Nathaniel Richardson, he formed a friendship, during the two years of his pastorate, which was emphatically life-long. On the last day of our friend's stay on earth, a letter, replete with strong consolation, was brought in, written to him by Mr. Richardson, which he desired to be read to him—dying though he seemed then to be—and to which he requested that an answer should be sent. Towards the first pastor's successor, Rev. Merrill Richardson, D.D., and the others, who have occupied the sacred office in the parish, he has ever been a warm friend, and with them a cordial fellow-laborer. Preëminently was he the friend of ministers, as the servants of God. "I do love those who labor to build up God's Kingdom," he wrote; and again: "I love to go up to God's house. I had rather be a doorkeeper there, than a king on his throne."



EVENING.

Reader, do you remember some tranquil evening, when the twilight was lengthened greatly, and you sat with others, perhaps out of doors, in the genial air of Summer? The day was done. The marginal hour you spent in quiet, restful talk; perhaps even you read, while, with singular favor, the heavens reflected upon you the lingering rays of the departed sun.

It was a long eventide, with which our friend's day of life on earth closed. The same home which cradled him, gave him a quiet, comfortable retreat in age. It heard his first cry, and his last trembling accents. Through its open doors, it had let him gently out, a toddling infant, making his first essays in walking. Through the same doors it kindly received him—eighty years and more afterward—when, a tottering grandsire, he came in from his last steps outside its walls. Now we see the merry boy, amiable we know he was,—frolicsome, gathering joy from almost everything, as the bee sips sweetness from flowers,—welcoming cold winter with glee. "In my youthful days, the coming winter was

hailed with delight. The whistling of the wind, the snow flying, were all in harmony with my boyish nature." Again, we see the aged man, sitting in the old arm-chair in the corner, near the glowing stove. Winter now is painfully endured, as a sort of rough jailer. "The snow blows; and old Boreas howls around, and reminds me I am a prisoner." But though the infirmities, which time brings, were inevitable, it was a blessed thing, in the experience of the aging couple, that they need not depart from the familiar home, where most of their united life had passed. The completion of fifty years together—the golden anniversary of husband and wife—came, on February 13, 1866.

From an account published at the time, are gathered the following particulars, of the manner in which the day was celebrated. The children, grandchildren, old neighbors, and friends, assembled at the homestead. Four persons were present, who were the sole survivors of the large number who attended the original wedding. Rev. E. M. Wright, the acting pastor of the church in Terryville, conducted a religious service in the afternoon, reading from the old family Bible, published in Oxford, England, in 1789; he gave out the hymn, which was sung at the wedding fifty years before, and then delivered an appropriate address of considerable length, in the course of which he said: "It was a union which gave much satisfaction to your relations and friends, and it was deemed eminently suitable by all. It

was the common opinion, frequently expressed, that you were worthy of each other,—not unequally yoked together; and revolving years have confirmed the correctness of that opinion. Tradition says (and I can readily believe it) that you were a very handsome couple; persons, too, of good dispositions and habits; and that you might live long and happily, was the wish and prayer of all good people in the community." He dwelt upon the unusual fact of the length of their married life, alluded to the marvelous changes that had taken place, during the half century; but reminded them that God had not changed, nor the Bible, nor the Gospel of salvation; that they had found Christ faithful to every promise, and ordering all things pertaining to them for their good, and that it was their privilege and joy, to trust him for the future. "We hope," he said, in closing, "that it may be granted to both of you, to live, and see many good days yet, in the land of the living. But God knows best. Let us cheerfully submit all to His wisdom, and be prepared, whether we are old or young, for a change of worlds, for we know not what shall be on the morrow. And may the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, be your God, and the God of your children, and your children's children, unto the latest generation. Amen and Amen." After the religious services, a collation was served. Among the presents given upon the occasion, was an illustrated Bible, containing the photographs of the children and friends, and inscribed "To our parents; presented by their children at their golden wed-

ding." The delightful season of the afternoon was repeated in the evening, by the coming together of the young people, to pay their respects to Mr. and Mrs. Fenn, and to prolong, with youthful hilarity, the joyful celebration of an event, of so deep and general interest. The hope declared by Pastor Wright, that it might be granted to both husband and wife, to "see many good days yet in the land of the living," was not a groundless one. Nearly seven years—a week of years—had rolled by,—it lacked but eight days, of the full measure of that period. On the night of February 3, 1866, Mr. and Mrs. Fenn had retired to rest, when, unannounced, the messenger, Death, came. The husband perceived a peculiar breathing of his wife—spoke to her. She did not answer. The end had come. What God had joined together, not man, but God Himself had put asunder, till the golden reunion of heaven.

"And so consumed, she melted from my arms,
And left me, on the earth, disconsolate."

Thus wrote that poet of our fathers, Wordsworth. It was a great mercy that this wife of fifty-seven years did not suffer and languish, and "consume" away, with long sickness. Yet God's will is ever best. It was His will that she should lie down to rest, at the close of one more day of useful, happy life, and waken in heaven. That was *a night* indeed to the companion who remained. How many times he was afterward heard to speak, of going to his "lonely room." How lonely it must have been! It is not strange that he looked over this world, beyond. Very much of the time, he

recalled the past, when they, who had gone on before, were with him here. "Perhaps their gentle spirits are hovering around me. I love to think it may be so. I am satisfied there is One who is always with me, and One who sticketh closer than a brother; it is He, who shed his blood on Calvary for me, to redeem my soul from death, and left the 'gate ajar' for me." In his diary, under date of February 3, 1876, is this entry. . . . "Three years ago, the companion of my youth, and mother of my children, followed the pioneers of our band who had gone before, and left me to walk down to the tomb alone; but my Saviour took me up, and permitted me to lay my weary head on His arm, and gave me His love and sustaining grace."

In his memorandum book, a fragment of the paper, on which the following lines were printed, was found, after his death. Years before, he had said to the writer, that they expressed his feelings. They are from the pen of C. P. Cranch:

"Through the gray willows the bleak winds are raving,
Here on the shore, with its drift-wood and sands;
Over the river the lilies are waving,
Bathed in the sunshine of Orient lands;
Over the river, the wide dark river,
Spring-time and summer are blooming forever.

"Here all alone on the rocks I am sitting,
Sitting and waiting—my comrades all gone,
Shadows of mystery, drearily flitting
Over the surf, with its sorrowing moan,
Over the river, the strange cold river;
Ah! must I wait for the boatman forever?

"Wife, and children, and friends were around me;
Labor and rest were as wings to my soul;
Honor and love were the laurels that crowned me;
Little I recked how the dark waters roll;
But the deep river, the gray misty river,
All that I lived for, has taken forever.

"Silently came back a boat o'er the billows,
Stealthily grated the keel on the sand,
Rustling footsteps were heard through the willows,
There the dark boatman stood, waving his hand,
Whispering, I come o'er the shadowy river,—
She who is dearest must leave thee forever.

"Suns that were brightest, and skies that were bluest,
Darkened and paled, in the message he bore.
Year after year went the fondest and truest,
Following that beckoning hand to the shore,
Down to the river, the cold, grim river,
Over whose waters they vanished forever.

"Yet not in vision of grief have I wandered;
Still have I toiled, tho' my ardors have flown;
Labor is manhood, and life is but squandered,
Dreaming vague dreams of the future alone;
Yet from the tides of that mystical river,
Voices of spirits are whispering ever.

"Lonely and old, in the dust I am waiting,
Till the dark boatman, with soft-muffled oar,
Glide o'er the waves, and I hear the keel grating,
See the dim, beckoning hand on the shore,
Wafting me over the welcoming river,
To gardens and homes, that are shining forever."

These verses have much of sadness in them. And they were suited, thus, to the use of our friend. But he was not always sad, by any means. While he would say, at one time: "I feel the weight of years, and eternity drawing near;" at many another time, he would expatiate in the scenes, and among the persons, of the past, and, like the minstrels of other days, across the sea, favor his visitor with portraits of people that were, incidents grave or humorous, scraps of history, biography, pictures of customs, now, and perhaps long since, obsolete.

Can we recall some specimens, of this sort of his fireside talk? Young men, in some numbers, used to go abroad from Connecticut, into other regions North and South, to sell clocks from house to house. There is now and then a white-haired man, still living in the vicinity, who, in his early years, followed this business. Among those who have passed off the stage, was one, well-known to Mr. Fenn, who seems to have had a sharp eye for the main chance. It is rather pleasant to know, that he went to the North, with his clocks, rather than to the South. If he had gone to the South, he might have afforded an additional reason to our Southern brethren, for wishing to dissolve the Union. It seems, it was the custom then, for strangers, who met or put up together at a tavern, to toss up a cent, in order to determine which one should be at the expense of a "treat." This particular Yankee, in anticipation of this practice, and in order to

make sure that the "treat" should always fall upon the other man, filed off a face from each one of two coins, and, soldering the remnants together, made a cent with two heads upon it, one on each side. When, therefore, he said: "Heads, I win; tails, I lose," he was master of the situation. It would not be strange, if the clocks that man sold, failed to keep exactly with the sun.

"I have seen," says the historian, Hume, "a French manuscript, containing accounts of some private disbursements of this king (Edward II of England). There is an article, among others, of a crown paid to one, for making the king laugh. To judge of the events of the reign, this ought not to have been an easy undertaking." Our friend had a quick appreciation, and real enjoyment, of the humorous. He would tell with laughter, of the remark made to himself, by a man well-known in the community, universally respected, as a man and Christian, yet eccentric and droll. Uncle W. was present at church one Sunday, after an attack of sickness. His wife was ill at home. The two men met in the vestibule, after service. Mr. Fenn asked after the health of Mr. W., and that of his wife. Mr. W. replied, and added: "We have a great many trials in this life, some of which, if it was the will of Providence, we should be glad to dispense with." Mr. Fenn became greatly attached to the physicians, who attended upon him, and, with some merriment, repeated the opinion of one of them, that his body was like the

"one-horse shay," and would finally come down to dust, all at once.

Overtaken, and completely drenched by a shower, upon one occasion, as the family were returning home from church, he minuted the fact in his diary, and added: "I thought of Rev. John Todd's remark, when he was so caught, that he did not believe in immersion, but was in favor of sprinkling."

For the eleven years and a half which remained to him of life on the earth, after the departure of his companion, Mr. Fenn was a member of the family of his youngest son, who, with filial devotion, continued, after marriage, to make the old house his home. Earthly help typifies heavenly. Heavenly help is often given through earthly means. To the writer's mind, the entreaty of the aged pilgrim, just below, seems to have a direction manward, as well as Godward. "I know I shall soon finish my work on earth, and, Oh, my Father, wilt thou be with me?"

"Be near when I am dying,
Then close beside me stand;
Let me, while faint and sighing,
Lean calmly on thy hand."

It is, perhaps, correct to say, that notwithstanding the fact, that the home of Mr. Fenn was somewhat retired, and difficult of access, by reason of its location on the summit of Town-Hill, there was not a private house in the neighboring village which was resorted to by more persons,

for the purpose of a social call, or visit. In his diary occurs such an item, as this: "Ten calls to-day." Who went there? Aged, middle-aged, and young. Numerous kindred,—children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and relatives of other degrees. He was of a vigorous and prolific stock. In his earlier days, he had eighty first-cousins, although but two were living at his death. Little children, as well as larger, loved "Grandpa Fenn," and he always had some pleasing thing to give them. People, native and foreign-born, visited him. A neighboring woman, wife and mother in an Irish family, said, on the morning of the funeral of Mr. Fenn: "My man was crying this forenoon, because Mr. Fenn is gone."

Of a plant—a beautiful house-plant, before a window, tall, flaming with the abiding brightness of the scarlet blossoms—the lady who cared for it, said: "That plant grew from a slip in a bouquet, which a friend gave us, many months ago." A kind act, a neighborly attention, a gentle, friendly word,—what shall become of it? Shall it just be looked at, and tossed out the door? Shall it be kept in thought, for a few minutes, or hours, and soon dismissed, as of little worth? Not thus does the loving soul. It cherishes that act of kindness done, that word of friendliness or affection, and, by and by, dwells, as in a garden of beauty. This was true of Mr. Fenn. It was precious to him, that his neighbors cared for him. No proffer of any kindness, from any source, met with repulse

from him, but always with warm appreciation. And so he lived in a sphere of flowering sympathies. The adversities of the lowliest burdened his soul. Between him and his fellow-men, was an open avenue, of mutual good-will and affection.

A man that hath friends, must show himself friendly. Young men loved Mr. Fenn. The names of many appear in his diary (some of whom preceded him to the world of spirits), followed often by some such expression as, "Dear young man, I love him." One of his intimates was a young man, just crossing the sea, on his return from Europe, when the aged man bade the world good-bye. And for him he left his message of love.

> "And still to love, tho' pressed with ill,
> In wintry age to feel no chill,
> With me, is to be lovely still."

Yes, and not with Cowper alone.

The interest which this superannuated laborer in the Lord's vineyard took in others, appears in a passage of his diary, of date, January 22, 1877, having reference to a young lady of the village, who died the following February 5th: "I have been thinking of C——. Must she die so young? O, dear Saviour, wilt thou grant she may give her heart to thee, and leave the evidence she has gone to be with Christ. This is the burden of my prayer to-night." Elsewhere he records having called upon, and conversed with her, upon the great matter of salvation. And she did leave evidence, when she departed, that she had gone to be with Christ.

In one instance, when a long-needed rain had come, he thus writes of it: "Surely it is a kind Father's hand, that has sent down the blessing. May all praise Him. O, may a cloud soon be seen arising, if no larger than a man's hand, of Divine Grace, that will expand and rise over the whole place, and descend, and water the vineyard of the Lord here, and many souls flock into the Kingdom of Jesus." Disqualified, by the weakness of sickness and age, from laboring in a more vigorous manner, he employed much time in making articles, expressive of his domestic tastes and ways. Door-mats of finely split husks, colored in bands, were a favorite product; and of a kind of bed-spread, of white cloth, ornamented with tufts of cotton, he said to the writer shortly before his death, he had made, in all, about thirty. These were bestowed upon friends, as tokens of his affection. "Had I wealth," he said, "I think I should put it into the bank of heaven, and draw my interest from thence." He was not only the recipient of calls; but delighted, when able, to visit others. To the homes of his children first—the two daughters residing in the village—he was accustomed to resort; then to many others, especially of the sick and aged. A long list of names was found among his papers, after his death, of families where he had visited, along with the pastor.

From the old house on the hill, representative New England home, radiated many chords of affection, vibrating musically under the touch of memory—many lines of communica-

tion between it, and hearts and homes, near and remote. Here is a letter from one, who, formerly a resident of the vicinity, and a near friend of the family, had removed to a new home in the West.

ELMWOOD, ILL., November 12, 1877.

DEAR FATHER FENN:

This autumn night,
While fire and lamps are burning bright,
I seat me in their cheerful light,
And will attempt to you to write.
A backward look I fondly cast,
I think of all our treasured past.
Sweet memories gather thick and fast,
As leaves before the wintry blast.
Again I sit beside your chair,
See your dear face and whitening hair
(Which time has only made more fair),
And learn great lessons rich and rare,
Lessons of patience and of love,
Of confidence in God above,
And trust, which earth can never move.
Dear aged friend, I long to grasp
Your hand within a friendly clasp,
That welcoming smile again to see,
And 'neath thy roof once more to be.
It may be we shall meet once more,
Upon this changeful, storm-beat shore;
It may be, friend, we next shall meet
Where storms of earth shall never beat.
I love to think that in the Home
Where sin nor death can ever come,
We'll meet and talk of by-gone days,
And, lost in wonder, love, and praise,

Our heavenly joys together share,
And bless His love who brought us there

Dear Father, may our Saviour shed
The oil of gladness on your head:
Forever shall His mighty arm
Shield you from every ill and harm;
His love shall guard from every ill;
His rod and staff shall comfort still;
And, as descends your earthly night,
"At evening-time it shall be light."

J. J. S.

In the Appendix B will be found communications, received by the friends of Mr. Fenn, after his death, from three of his principal correspondents, viz.: Deacon Joel Blakeslee, once Deacon of the Church in Plymouth, afterward, and at present, Deacon of the South Congregational Church in Bridgeport; Rev. Nathaniel Richardson, first pastor of the Church in Terryville; and Rev. H. B. Mead, pastor of the same Church, from 1871 to 1874. Also an expression of his regard for Mr. Fenn, will there be found, from Rev. J. W. Backus of Plainville. The character of Mr. Fenn appears pretty clearly in the foregoing pages. As we draw this account of him to a close, it may be of profit to the reader to have his attention directed, as in part by way of recapitulation, to some particulars, in which Mr. Fenn is very strongly impressed upon the memory of his friends. One of these was his sense of the Divine presence with him, and providence over him. Once he wrote, "Now, as I stand at the threshold of the door that opens on immortality, I can

look and see my Heavenly Father's hand, that led me, and guided my footsteps all through, and gave me strength equal to my day." These were favorite lines with him:

"God is never so far off,
As even to be near;
He is within us; our spirit is
The home He holds most dear."

"When I am here alone," he once remarked, "I have no doubt that Jesus is present in the room, not a doubt." Another element in the character of our friend, was his affectionate trust in God, and in His Son, our Saviour. "I have been thinking that if any one should ask me now, what is my hope, I should say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, with all my heart, and my hope is in God, and my expectation from Him." Again he said, "I am at peace, at rest. Jesus knows that I love Him; and I think He loves me." More than once he has been heard to say, "I feel, when I retire at night, that I want to lie right down at the feet of Jesus, and take right hold of Him, and go to sleep; and whether to awake here, or there, I would not choose." And a further instance of his expression of submission, and aspiration, and trust, was as follows: "I feel perfectly submissive to the will of God, whether I am to live or die. I desire to have Christ with me, in me, and around me, all the while. Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee. Why should I fear to cross the river, and be with my Saviour?" He loved to quote the lines:

"My knowlege of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that He knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

His gratitude and praisefulness were a prominent feature in Mr. Fenn. "I am still confined to the house"—thus he expressed himself in one instance—"by continued ill-health. I have this day called up to my mind the many blessings my Heavenly Father has conferred upon me. Although my body is diseased, my vocal powers long hushed in silence—perhaps forever,—yet my mental faculties are good. I can read God's Holy Word; the light of my eyes is still good; my temporal wants are all supplied; and shall I complain? No. May my whole soul go up to God, in a song of praise and thanksgiving, for His unmerited blessings."

We will only mention, further, that our friend ever evinced a lowly mind; and with an humble opinion of himself, was united the desire of holiness. He felt that he was a sinner; and we would not eulogize him, as though he were perfect in the sight of God. Yet it was evident, that the Grace of Christ had wrought great effects of saintliness in him. He was not a stranger to seasons of prayerful heart-searching. "I am alone this evening," is the record at one place. "I find it good at times to be alone, and meditate on things unseen and eternal, and see how I stand with God,—if He has indeed the affections of my heart. I think I love Him for what He is of Himself, and love holiness for holiness' sake. Dear Jesus, let me

not be deceived with a false hope, that will perish when I appear before Thee; but search me and try me, and lead me in the way of life everlasting." Similarly, at another time, he says: "If I know my own heart, there is nothing I desire so much, as to be wholly consecrated to the Lord. O Father in heaven, wilt Thou give me a clear view of Thy character; and may I love Thee, for what Thou art of Thyself, and love holiness for holiness' sake."

A story is current in Ohio, of John Quincy Adams, "the old man eloquent," that when he was present, and delivered the address, at the laying of the corner-stone of the observatory, at Cincinnati, about forty years ago, a river captain, charmed with the oratory of Mr. Adams, who was then about seventy-seven years old, exclaimed: "What a pity that so good an engine could not be taken out, and put into a new hull!"

Now, does not that wish of the steamboat captain, bring to mind just the provision, which the Holy Scriptures inform us, the Heavenly Father has made for His children? "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be, that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed,

but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." II Corinthians v, 1–4.

"This mud-wall cottage shakes. I shall soon become an heir of immortality. O my Jesus, prepare me for rest in Thy kingdom." So wrote our friend, toward the last. And more than once has the writer heard him, after alluding to his bodily condition, repeat, in his own impressive way:

"My spirit, with laborious strife,
Bears up the crazy load,
And drags these poor remains of life,
Along the weary road."

It had been a prayer with him, that his mental faculties might hold out, until his earth-work was done. And until almost the last, the "engine" worked grandly. "What a pity that so good an engine could not be taken out, and put into a new hull!" What a pity that such a beautiful, dear spirit could not be transferred to a new, and glorious body! Ah, but that is just what death means, to the Christian. The same body? If so, yet it will be new. There is an old house, a few miles out of our village, which has lately been made over. A part of the original frame remains. But the old house is thoroughly renovated. Its inmates are sheltered beneath a snug roof, and behind close walls, they walk on new, firm, smooth floors, and look out of new, open, clear windows. The home is old, but the house is practically new. "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for the Saviour,

the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

The last day on earth was Wednesday, August 20, 1884. To himself it was manifest, that he was going. By an increase of disorders, to which he had long been subject, he had been, for some days, confined to his bed. Dissolution came on apace. His soul was, for the most part, confident and peaceful. On Monday, he said: "One night, not long since, I was awake, and very despondent,—never more so. I could not pray,—could only cry out, 'I am stricken; O God, undertake for me.' It was not a minute, till I was full of joy, and thanksgiving. All my despondency was gone, and I have felt very little since." Looking at the "Silent Comforter," on the wall,—one of the many gifts of affection which he had received—he read slowly, and emphatically, from it, "There — is — a friend — that — sticketh — closer — than — a brother." He spoke, repeatedly, of the comfort he had, reading those passages from the "Silent Comforter,"—all he then could read. The children—all but the oldest son, in distant Michigan—with some of the grandchildren, gathered once more about him,—of whom he had written years before: "It is pleasant to have children, and grandchildren, come around, with their loving hearts. It cheers up the drooping spirits of the aged parent, as he looks upon his offspring, full of life

and activity." As the peculiar change of the solemn hour came over him, he was supported, much of the time, in the arms of filial love. Sinking into sleep, he would waken again, and look eagerly into the faces of his children, remaining near him. Once, articulating with difficulty, he broke out, addressing his son's wife, and gazing intently at her: "God bless you, M., for all you have done for me." Again, he began to repeat the lines of the poet, Pope, entitled the "Dying Christian;" and, though several times overmastered by the dying stupor, as often as he recovered himself, took up again the triumphant death-song, until he had finished it. As repeated by him, it was indeed the language of the dying Christian:

"Vital spark of heavenly flame!
Quit, oh, quit this mortal frame;
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh, the pain!—the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life!

"Hark! they whisper; angels say,
'Sister spirit, come away;'
What is this absorbs me quite,—
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?

"The world recedes,—it disappears!
Heaven opens on my eyes!—my ears
With sounds seraphic ring!
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
'O Grave! where is thy victory?
O Death! where is thy sting?'"

At one o'clock, on the morning of Thursday, August 21st, he ceased to breathe, and the long life on earth, of eighty-seven years, one month, and twenty-six days, was ended.

On Friday, August 22d, the old house on the hill opened its doors, once more, and received the thronging company of people, Protestant and Roman Catholic, who came to say good-bye; and, while mourning the departure of their venerated friend, to thank God for His Grace unto His servant, and unto men through him. Hymns were sung; a discourse was preached, from Psalm xcii, 14, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;" prayer was offered; and, after the last view of the peaceful face was taken, the large concourse moved on, descending along the road delineated in the opening lines of this book, through the village to the cemetery, and laid down the visible form of the dear, dear man, in the grave. There it is peacefully resting now, even as he himself, once, had written, "I have been to the cemetery to-day, and viewed the place where the dust of loved ones sleep, and the place where I expect my poor remains will sleep, ere long; but we shall not be there."

Let our tribute to him close, with the appreciative and affectionate words of his grandson, Colonel Augustus H. Fenn:

"'Age is dark and unlovely,'

says Ossian; but Cicero has described its beauties; and Elam Fenn illustrated them in his life. To those who knew and loved him, the level rays of the setting sun will ever seem

more glorious, than its mid-day glow. 'Crabbed age and youth cannot live together,' said Shakespeare; but his age was not crabbed; and youth lived with it, and adored it. It was like old wine and ripe fruit, the sparkle in the cup, the blush upon the peach. The vital spark was purely of heavenly flame. It shone brighter and brighter, as the morning star, in the darkness before the dawn, until absorbed in the light of the perfect day. It was electric and eclectic; it gathered fuel for its flame, from every experience and vicissitude of life, as the bees extract honey from the weed and flower. It was set upon a hill, and it was not hid. It shone before men, and was seen; and the Father glorified. The beatitudes were his. He was poor in spirit. He was called to mourn. He was meek, merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker. He hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and to him the promises have not failed, and will not ever fail.

"And so, when, into his open grave, the starting rain-drops fell, a sunbeam gleamed in every drop, and a rainbow sat upon the clouds, its foot upon his coffin, and its head upon the sky."