

An interesting booklet of historical lore has recently been presented to Your Home Library. The author, Mr. Arthur Crocker, was a descendant of the pioneer Crocker family which came to this locality about 1794. Mr. Crocker's "Reminiscences of Finch Hollow" picture his boyhood and youth which were lived in this vicinity. His descriptions of the country-side, the singing school and the square dances give the reader a vivid picture of the customs and life as it was lived in this area about one hundred years ago.

Mr. Crocker, in his later years, was employed as a right-of-way man by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in the mid-western states. He was popular as a story-teller and often entertained his colleagues with incidents and stories of his younger days. He was a veteran of the Civil War and spent one year in Libby Prison.

A daughter, Rena Crocker Leezer, who now resides in California, had the work compiled and it has been presented to the Library.

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FORWARD by

Rena Crocker Leezer

My father, Arthur E. Crocker, wrote these rambling reminiscences in the early 1900s, after his retirement from active business life. He was born in Finch Hollow in 1840, and he knew the people and history of the Susquehanna Valley as did few of his contemporaries. He loved to talk about those early days, and he watched the inception and growth of Lestershire, as it was when he knew it, with keen interest.

For thirty years prior to 1900, he was “on the road” - employed by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in the building of new lines throughout the eastern and middle western states. During much of that time he served in the Right of Way Department, and had many warm friends among his associates. In January, 1905, a silver loving cup was presented to him bearing the inscription:

“Presented to Arthur E. Crocker by his associates of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, in token of their respect and affectionate regard.”

It was primarily with these friends in mind that he undertook the writing of these sketches, and he planned to have them organized in book form and published. But he became ill and passed away (in 1910) without seeing this accomplished. Among his papers he left the following dedication -

“Through the years I have been pleased and flattered by the interest my friends in the A.T. and T. have shown in my stories of Finch Hollow. To these associates, and especially to my best friend, Mr. Charles D.M. Cole, this little collection of reminiscences is affectionately dedicated by the ‘old man’, A.E.C.”

“Reminiscences of Finch Hollow”

In the year 1784 my great-grandfather, Ezekiel Crocker, then living in the town of Richmond, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, became associated with eight other gentlemen and capitalists of New England in what was and still is known as The Boston Purchase Company. This company acquired, by purchase from the Indians and concessions from the Government, large tracts of land in central New York.

During the ensuing five years a corps of surveyors plotted this land into townships and lots, making accurate surveys and establishing lines which are still referred to in all conveyances. For instance, the farm on which I was born in Finch Hollow was Lot No. 176 in Chenango Township of the Boston Purchase, containing almost exactly one hundred acres. About the year 1790 these lands were apportioned to the several share-holders according to their several shares and considering the relative value of the lands. When all these lands had been apportioned, The Boston Purchase Company was dissolved, title to the land passing to the share-holders as apportioned.

Ezekiel Crocker thus became the owner of many thousand acres of the finest timber land in the world. All of it was a virgin forest and much of it was covered with cork pine, the most valuable timber in the world for general purposes. It is sad to note that most of this valuable timber was wasted in the mad rush to clear the land for farms.

In my early youth many isolated tracts of this pine were still standing, but today only a few dozen of these majestic trees are standing on all those thousands of acres owned by Ezekiel Crocker.

One body of the land thus accruing to Ezekiel Crocker was located near Moravia and Genoa in what are now Tompkins and Yates Counties; another large tract was near the mouth of Pipe Creek in Tioga County. Still another tract was three to five miles up the Chenango River from its junction with the Susquehanna, then called Chenango Point (Chenango Pint for short), now the flourishing city of Binghamton. But the principal tract was down the Susquehanna from the “Pint” some four miles - the site of an Indian village - where several hundred acres had been under cultivation, for nobody knew how long. Much interest was manifested in settling this part of New York. Chenango Point in 1794 had been a flourishing settlement. A good road had been opened between the Hudson River at Rondont, crossing the Delaware River at Coshocton, thence by way of New Milford through Chenango Point and down the Susquehanna to Newtown (now Elmira), thence through Horseheads and Big Flats to Ithaca, and this road was soon opened through to Buffalo.

Emigrants from the east came in numbers; some with their families and all their

possessions on an ox-cart stopped here, while others pressed on.

In this year (1794) Ezekiel Crocker gave up his home in Massachusetts and came with his family - Oliver, a young man, Samuel, then fourteen years old (my grandfather), David, younger, and Lucy, a little girl, to this Indian village, built a large log house and commenced keeping tavern and clearing up land. He also built a saw-mill and a few years later he built a large brick house which for years was used as a tavern and is still standing.*

*The Colonel Crocker place, now a country club.

Judge Patterson, one of the shareholders in the Boston Purchase Company, had taken as a part of his apportionment, a large tract adjoining Ezekiel Crocker's on the west. They were always friends and both prospered, coming to their new possessions at the same time. In the year 1800 Judge Patterson completed a fine colonial mansion which is still standing, in excellent repair, an ornament to the valley.* It is now owned and occupied by my friend John H. Sayer, who married Helen, the youngest Richards girl. This mansion and its accompanying outbuildings were also kept "for the entertainment of man and beast".

This section settled up rapidly and everybody seemed to prosper. Ezekiel Crocker lived to the age of ninety-one, dying in 1825. His remains lie in the Crocker burying ground at East Union, now the village of Lestershire. Many interesting stories are told of him and I judge he was an eccentric old fellow.

It is related that when he was over eighty he became enamored of a young widow, a Mrs. Rose, and wanted her to marry him. Mrs. Rose did not jump at the offer so he measured out a bushel of silver dollars as a bribe to her to accept. This she also refused, no doubt thereby showing her good sense. When his children had grown up and married Ezekiel gave them each a large dower in land and money. Oliver got the brick house and lands adjoining, also the "Genoa tract". Samuel had the greater part of the Indian village and several thousand acres adjoining, also money to build a fine house on really the finest site in the whole valley. This house and the five hundred acres surrounding it was the best farm in the county.

David got the up river tract and much money. Lucy got the Pipe Creek tract and money. She married Ezekiel Dubois, who turned his attention almost exclusively to lumbering. Their descendants are still in the lumber business. The name Dubois is known to every lumberman in the United States and Canada.

As Ezekiel waxed old he desired to be relieved of business cares. He appointed one Pampallo of Oswego his agent, with full power of attorney. Pampallo was shrewd and unscrupulous, and before the old man died he had succeeded in robbing him of nearly every dollar left. His descendants still live in affluence but they may not know the source of their wealth.

I now come to the time my father, Samuel Junior, was married in 1838.

My grandfather had a family of twelve children, and about this time he gave to the oldest seven, to the girls \$1000.00 each and to the boys one hundred acres of land each. In this way my father became possessed of the Finch Hollow farm, Lot 178 in the Chenango Township of the Boston Purchase. This was all woodland except a few acres on which was a log house occupied by Miles Andrews, son of an old millwright who had for many years been in the employ of my grandfather.

My father moved into this log house with Miles Andrews, employed him by the year, and together they proceeded to make a farm out of the wilderness, destroying acres of these trees into great heaps and burning them, leaving the ashes to fertilize the soil. For years afterwards I can remember that everybody was engaged in the same business, destroying these magnificent forests to make farms which today are not worth a twentieth part of what the timber would be worth if still standing. This is the commercial aspect of the affair.

As lumber became more valuable every man with small means and abundance of energy built a saw-mill, and these still faster destroyed the forests.

*Washington Hall

In 1841, when I was about a year old, my father, who had become thoroughly inoculated with the western fever, brought about by the glowing descriptions of the prairies of the territory of Wisconsin by his four sisters who had all married and gone to the vicinity of Madison and Columbus, Wisconsin, determined to see for himself. Leaving Mother and the baby with Miles and his wife in the old log house, he went to Wisconsin. What he saw infatuated him with the country and he determined to make the new territory his home. He bought 160 acres of land and homesteaded 160 acres more. He built a cabin, plowed and planted ten acres of prairie, remained one year as required by law and left for the east, fully determined to make Wisconsin his home.

Arriving at the old home and making his intentions known to his father, the old gentleman, probably with a grain of selfishness in the proposition, suggested that he take the old homestead for five years on really his own terms. My grandfather, who was getting along in years, was anxious to be relieved of the care of the large farm of five hundred acres still remaining and after much persuasion my father undertook the task. He moved into the little house at the foot of the lawn (burned in 1856) and took up the work of running the farm with the energy he was accustomed to throwing into everything he undertook.

While living here I have my first recollections of life. I remember my mother as a beautiful woman, and her younger sister Irene as a plump girl, very fond of me and my brother Andrew, the baby, and afterward of Silas, the next baby. I remember going to the big house often and how my grandfather seemed delighted to romp and play with me and to take me up in the garret and show me all the old trumpery that is sure to gather in such places; to go into the back yard with me and shake from the Patterson Sweet for my eating the first ripe apple; then how he would lead me into his own sitting room and show me, with much patience, the pretty pictures in his books, answering at the same time without apparent annoyance the thousand and one questions only a boy full of life can ask.

I also recollect the keen enjoyment I used to take in a ride to the island on a hay-rack with my father, and the ride back again through an arm of the river on a load of fragrant hay, and as we came up through the winding road through the willows the horses stopping to rest when they had reached the top of the steep bank, my father calling my attention to the streak of nearly obliterated mussel shells still to be seen in the newly plowed gravel knoll. He said, and I am satisfied it is true, that these shells were thrown there by the Indians years and years before. The Susquehanna mussel is a fresh water clam, found in great numbers in the rifts.

I also well remember the excitement preceding election in the fall of 1844, when my father, a Democrat, was leader of the band - a procession of two hundred wagons drawn by oxen, headed by the drum corps, having halted under the hickory trees lining our road. My father had rolled out a barrel of cider for the refreshing of the crowd. I, a fat-legged, barefooted boy, trousers rolled above my knees, with a partly frayed chip hat in my hand, was told by somebody he would give me a sixpence if I would "hurrah" for Clay. I refused,

and when somebody else asked if I would hurrah for Polk I immediately climbed to the high gate post across the road and gave three lusty cheers for Polk and Dallas. My last friend snatched my hat from my hand, passed it around among the crowd and returned it to me nearly half full of old copper cents.

I also well recollect my mother's brothers, Julius and John, who went to the Mexican war. I hope I have yet among my archives the pewter whistle Uncle Julius gave me the day they went away, and the day my mother's eyes were so swollen and red. I also well remember the infrequent occasions when my mother would permit me to go spearing with my uncles, and the jolly good times I always had on these occasions, taking care of the fish and replenishing the fire with fat pine.

The first day I went to school is a day I shall always remember. Mart Stone, a particular friend of my parents, was teacher. He had asked my mother to let me come to school and had always been so affable and tried so hard to place me at my ease that I promised to come. I was afraid of the rough, noisy boys I had seen and heard before school called and at recess, but everything was so quiet after nine o'clock I lost my fears, and Mother having fixed me up I walked into the entry and gently rapped on the school-room door. Not getting any reply I grew more bold, opened the door and walked in. I was astonished at the reception I got. The school-house was one of the best of its day, clean for a school-house, built after the regulation pattern, one continuous sloping desk around three sides of the room in front of which was a continuous pine board seat. On this seat, in various positions, were the boys and girls of the neighborhood. The Chambers, the Richards, the Bloomers, the Allens, the Sayers, and Crockers, the Tylers and others I do not now recall. Some of the older girls were sitting up primly in front of their books. Dan Richards was doing a sum on his slate. Susan Cartwright was scowling at the pranks of John Chamber, who was trying to pinch John Bloomer. Kit Chambers was turned half around in her seat spelling out the words of her lesson in an audible whisper. Several of the smaller boys were trying to pull slivers off the low bench on which they were sitting.

The teacher was making a pen for Helen Crocker (all quill pens in those days). I was two and a half years old and so frightened that I did not move, but stood leaning against the closed door while some of the younger boys who knew me were making faces at me. After a time Mart Stone discovered me and came over toward me, smiling, with his hand extended, to welcome me to the school. He hoped I was well. I had lost my tongue but managed to say as I rolled up my coat sleeve, "Mr. Stone, I've got a clean shirt on".

How well I remember the infinite pains Father and Mother took to lead me into the paths of rectitude, justice, morality and kindness.

I recollect Charley Davis and I were cronies. When Charley came to visit me Mother took so much pains to impress on me the desirability of being generous, to take pleasure in helping Charley to enjoy the visit and to enjoy the use of my things.

One day I went to visit Charley. My Uncle Levi had made me a bow and arrow; this I took along with me. Charley was much impressed with its beauty and usefulness and greatly coveted it. It was great; I liked it myself. Charley finally offered to trade me his new cart which some midsummer Santa Claus had just given him. I did not want to trade but remembering my mother's injunction to be always generous, I did so. Before very long Charley, who after the trade would not let me touch the bow, by overworking the machine broke it down entirely. Of course we were both sorry and finally Charley insisted on trading back. This I refused and Charley got mad and pitched into me. We had a delightful scrap. I think Charley got the best of it but I grabbed the cart and ran home with it. Mother inquired into the particulars and finally got Uncle Levi to make me a new bow and asked me as a particular favor to her to take the cart back to Charley. I did so, but I fear without that feeling of humility and forgiveness that Mother would have wished. My recollection is that Charley and I were not so chummy for a long time after that.

Long before the five years of my father's tenancy of the old homestead were ended he had been induced for a large price to dispose of his Wisconsin holdings. I have often mentioned how near I came to being a rich man's son. This 320 acres lies in the heart of what is now the city of Watertown and is of course worth millions.

The five year term was ended and father, with his growing family, had moved into a new painted frame house which he had built on the Finch Hollow farm. He had been elected trustee of joint school district No. 14, Union and Maine. He was a progressive, up-to-date man and had strongly advocated the building of a new school house to take the place of the dilapidated log school-house then in use. This proposition had met with strong opposition, the leader of which was Nathaniel R. Finch, known by the same name at home and abroad.

Several school meetings had been held. Nathaniel was a profane man and on one occasion he said "By G-d, that school-house has been good enough to educate my young ones in and it's good enough for hisn. Sam Crocker can't bring none of his river notions up here."

My father finally won the fight. The school-house was built, and after the first pang of paying for it was forgotten, it became immensely popular. It was the clubhouse of the neighborhood, and almost every public function was held there - day-school, religious meetings of all kinds, writing school, debating society, picnics, funerals, lectures, and traveling shows were held in it; phrenological lectures, "poppit" shows, magic lantern entertainments, - in fact it was used for almost every purpose except weddings and apple-cuts.

Lib Richards had been installed first teacher and it has been used continuously until this day. It is still standing on its original site and though weather-beaten and sadly out of repair it stands today, a monument to the perseverance and public

spirit of my father. It is not much to look at and never was, but it served an excellent purpose and was really a great undertaking for that day, in that place. Those were the days before the great industrial trusts and combinations were thought of, when the individual counted. Now the best of us common people are only a cog in the wheel, an infinitesimal part of the great whole.

Around the portals of this old school-house cluster many of the memories of my boyhood and youth. Many incidents, some pathetic, more humorous and all interesting to me come to my memory as I recall the years spent in Finch Hollow. It will be my pleasure to relate some of these for my own amusement and the entertainment of my friends.

I wish at this time to speak of my mother. She was "God's people," a lady in every sense in which this term can apply. She was the daughter of Felix McMally, a North of Ireland man who drifted into our country from I do not know where, in the early 1830's. The first knowledge I have of the family is that they lived up in the hemlocks near Hawleyton, near the line of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. The three oldest children were drowned by the going to pieces of a raft on a large mill-pond. Shortly after this the mother died, and Felix with his four remaining children - Valeria, my mother, being the eldest - came to Chenango Point to live.

Felix McNally was a remarkable man in many ways - improvident, generous to a fault, fond of cards and drink, sociable, well-read, thoroughly posted in history and current events, and nobody could beat him in an argument. His ability and social proclivities soon brought him into acquaintance with the best people of that progressive community.

He was an intimate acquaintance, boon companion, of Daniel S. Dickinson, Osburn Birdsell, Judge Stow, the Whitneys, Rexfords, Sheldons, St. Johns and dozens of others whose names are remembered as prominent people of their time. Judge Stow saw his daughter Valeria and was so impressed with her lady-like manners and sweet disposition that he induced her to come into his family, first as a domestic and soon afterward and for a number of years as a companion and governess to his daughters. While with the Stows she became acquainted with my father and they were married in 1838.

Soon after this event Felix moved into the Crocker neighborhood, living in one of my grandfather's houses. He lived in this neighborhood ever afterward. He died in 1866 and was buried in the Crocker burying-ground.

When my father moved into the new painted house on the Finch Hollow farm I was about eight years old, and during the next twenty years Mother and I were always together except while I was away to the war. I was the oldest child, and it was my pleasure to assist her in her arduous duties in taking care of a household, large in itself, and always growing - nine children and the hired help, and father always had a raft of men around. Mother seldom had a hired girl, doing most of the work herself with such assistance as I could give, and

today it is one of the most satisfactory memories of those days that never a cross or irritable word passed between us. Every service was cheerfully rendered and thankfully received. Kind to everybody and untiring in her duty to her family, I never saw a person who worked harder or more continuously than she. I do not recall that I ever saw her sleeping or idle. Her efforts for her family and friends were only halted by the limit of human endurance.

We today talk of the strenuousness of business life but none of us work as she did or accomplish more. The conveniences of modern life were but little known in those days. Matches were just coming into use and I never saw a stove until I was ten years old. Stockings for all that family were knit by hand. She carded and spun the wool, not only for these but for chests and closets full of soft, bright-colored bed spreads provided for her daughters. Patchwork quilts were made also in large store for the daughters. Rag carpets for the whole house were made by her except for the weaving.

Every season and every day and evening brought its work. Then of course boys would get stone bruises on their feet and slivers in their hands, and bruises and contusions on all parts of their bodies, and nobody but Mother could properly attend to these. Bright hair ribbons must be prepared and the best dresses of the girls done up for the picnic tomorrow. Then a little rosy-cheeked girl, tired of the activities of the day or feeling aggrieved at some incident of play or at school, needed sympathy and encouragement, and she got both, and when she had fallen asleep in Mother's lap and she and all the rest had been snugly tucked away in bed, then began the preparations for the five o'clock breakfast, after which all the stockings and apparel of the family must be looked over, rents repaired or new garments made.

When she got any rest I do not know. Father built a saw-mill which for three months in the year brought additional help to be cared for in the house. In 1852 he bought the John Brown farm adjoining, which also brought increased duties to Mother. With it all she was cheerful. She had no intimates in Finch Hollow, but many friends, good friends, in Chenango Point and in the river district where Father was born. An extra show of cheerfulness and happiness seemed to overspread her face when any of these would run up for a half day's visit.

School teachers nominally "boarded around," but three-fourths of the time the teacher was at our house. It must have been a good place to come to.

In 1858 our house burned and nothing was saved. The accumulations of a lifetime, all these chests and closets, filled, as I said, with the work of her hands, and in which she took so much pride as being able to provide royally for her daughters when the time should come for them to leave the home-nest and establish nests for themselves, - all gone in a night! Not even a suit of clothes to cover the nakedness of some. It might have been worse. Thank the good Lord, all had escaped with their lives.

The Brown house happened to be empty and we moved into it. Mother had to commence life again with nothing and nine naked children to care for. She took up the task with energy and resignation but her health was never the same afterward and I think the poor woman lost heart. The Civil War broke out and her three oldest boys went away, - I to the service of the government on military railroads, Andrew to be killed in battle and Silas to four years of service in the ranks. I saw little of Mother during the time, 1862 to 1866, but every time I did see her I noticed a

failing in health. Though always cheerful, she was never so happy as when with me. I had always been her confidante, to a greater extent than any of her daughters. She relied on me.

It is now a pleasure mixed with sadness to remember how her face brightened and how the color came back to her cheeks when I was with her for an hour.

In 1867 my father suddenly determined to sell out everything and move to Missouri, a country he knew nothing about except that the Barnums, old friends of his, had gone there. Barnum gave such a glowing account of the mild weather, the abundance of fruit and the ease with which a living could be gotten there that Father determined to go at once. He sold the old farm to me, the Brown house to Munson Finch, and his personal truck at auction, getting together in this way about \$5000, and started with his family and a few household goods to the wilds of central Missouri. I think I never quite forgave my father for taking Mother and the younger children to that God-forsaken country, the home of the guerrillas, the seat of indolence and ignorance, where bigotry and hatred of the North was the only religion, - a country that never heard the civilized shriek of the locomotive.

One of the most pathetic incidents of my life was when my mother came to bid good-bye to her first-born, her old home, and all her friends, to take up, with apparent cheerfulness and resignation this new duty to her husband and family, knowing in her heart she would never see these again. I can now read between the lines of her letters from that socially frigid country the pining for home and friends which draws tears from my eyes whenever I think of her there. I never saw her again; she pined away and died. My poor dear Mother, may she now be enjoying in Heaven that peace and rest she never knew on earth.

But why do I speak particularly of my mother? Because I knew her better. The busy, selfish men of today may thank their stars that every hamlet, almost every nook and corner of this great land of ours shelters some little mother who goes on day by day, without thought of reward, scattering seeds of kindness, uncomplaining, always lending a helping hand. Every inspiration of philanthropy and charity comes from observing these. May God bless the little Mother!

The Finch Hollow of today is not the Finch Hollow of 1850. Today it has a dejected aspect, while in 1850 the business of lumbering and wood cutting gave it an air of thrift which has long since departed.

The Erie Railroad had just been completed, Pierpont on the Hudson to Dunkirk on Lake Erie, and as all its engines burned wood, thousands of cords were required. Every station and every siding was banked with immense ranks of wood. This was furnished by everybody owning timber land within convenient reach of the railroad. For ten years it appeared to be just as much a part of the season's work to get out more or less wood for the railroad as was the planting and harvesting of the various crops. Today this industry has passed just as surely as the hunting and killing of the buffalo, and for the same reason - there are no more forests in Finch Hollow, and there are no more buffalo anywhere.

There is also a great difference in the soil. Then it was virgin, enriched by the accumulation of forest mold and the tons of ashes produced by the burning of the wastes from lumbering and wood cutting. Now the soil is exhausted. The waving fields of wheat, producing 30, 40 and even 50 bushels to the acre, are seen no more. Everything seems to be run down at the heel.

Of the people who lived in Finch Hollow in 1850 less than a dozen remain there. Most of them are dead, and the living are scattered over the earth.

Finch Hollow extends over a territory about four miles long, on either side of Dry Run Creek, and from four to eight miles from the city of Binghamton.

In 1850 my Uncle Roe Crocker's farm was claimed as in both Finch Hollow and the river district. Roe had lately married Eliza Andrews, sister of Miles, and they were living on the farm given him by my grandfather, located partly on the flat and partly on the sloping sides of the hills which bound the valley of the Susquehanna on the north. Grandfather had built a saw-mill on this property, which passed to Uncle Roe with the farm. It was the first saw-mill anywhere in that neighborhood, and it outlived them all. It is gone now; not even the foundation stones remain. These and the immense stones used in building the dam have long since been hauled away and have lost their identity in the foundations of the warehouses of Binghamton.

Uncle Roe had built a new house up on the road, while the old house down by the mill was occupied by the Andrews family. Those at home were the widow, Allen, Alonzo, Charley, Hortense and Martha. All these will appear in active parts in these reminiscences.

The road ran up on the west side of the creek and some distance from it. This road is reasonably direct, but hilly. Within a stone's throw of Roe's new house lived John Cortright, who married one of the Chambers girls, an aunt of my friend Orlon Harmon. Cortright had but one child, a daughter, Susan, who afterward married my Uncle Elias,

known as Broad. John Cortright was a character in his way, and he may appear further.

The next place along the road belonged to Bob Brown. His place was long and narrow, and extended back from the creek to Rutherford or Oak Hill. My father afterwards bought the land, and Bob worked for Father a great deal, particularly in the saw-mill. He married Nick Brink's sister and they had one girl, Almira, - a slipshod like her father.

Next came the Kendall place, a small farm owned at this time by Alfred Kendall, a cabinet maker. He sold to Dave Miller, and Miller to Alanson Pardee, a shoemaker and hunter. Pardee came from "Ancrum, 16 miles from Copake", and was a great friend of Steve Simmons.

On occasions when the two cronies would visit Goslin's tavern, Pardee was wont to boast of the ability of a certain shoemaker in that eastern country who could make six pairs of shoes in a day!! - if - he could only get the last!

Next came the John Brown farm, which Father bought in 1851. I have but slight recollection of the Browns. Mrs. Brown was a Rutherford, from the Shore's neighborhood in the western or central part of the town of Union. John Brown had the reputation of being the most penurious man in seven counties. People in Finch Hollow called him stingy. It is related of him that he fed his calves only the refuse from the horse stable, and that they always looked raw-boned and hungry. This want of care and nourishment left them weak and sickly. One cold, raw morning in March Brown came to his barn to "fodder" his stock and found three of his calves dead. He was amazed, sorrowful and speechless for a time. Finally after the full significance of the situation had dawned upon him and the enormity of the ingratitude of these dead calves had filtered into his mind, his indignation became uncontrollable and he began kicking the carcasses around the yard, at the same time talking to himself or the dead calves. "Dod ding you! Eat up all the hay, then die, will you? Dod ding you! Live all winter, then die in the spring, will you? Dod ding you!" Then he would kick them again.

Directly east of the Brown farm was the Jim Carver place, where afterward occurred the famous cradling match between John Finch and George Henion.

Adjoining the Brown place on the north was my father's farm, and in revery I recall every building - house, three barns, corn house, chicken and hog house, the orchard back of the house extending to the foot of the big hill pasture, the never-failing spring at the foot of this hill which Father tapped with "pump logs", bringing the purest water to a penstock in the back yard, and also leading by branch lines to a large trough in the barnyard, where the stock could enjoy without stint, equally with the family, this great boon to living men and animals - pure, cool, limpid water.

In reverie I can also see the magnificent meadow which sloped off to the south and east, terminating at the little creek running east near the southern boundary of the farm, under the road and under the "big bridge", and as it approached the Dry Run Creek it had worn a chasm through the bluff. In reverie I also recall the old log house in which I was born, the fine garden south of it, the patch of tansy by the spring, the old-fashioned flowers - hollyhocks, marigolds, Johnny-jump-ups, (pansies), lilies, the fragrant bunches of lilacs, which stood as sentinels on either side of the path to the door, the wild cucumber vine which hung in delightful festoons from the decaying porch, the sprays of "live-forever" which still clung to the foundation logs, the hop vine which refused to die but perennially spread itself over the stone pile down by the corner of the garden.

This log house was never afterward occupied, except for a pair of Phoebes which annually built their nest under the rafters and reared their young without molestation.

I recollect every cowpath in the north pasture, which radiated in every westerly and northerly direction from the barn just opposite the old house.

I can recall the location of every chestnut tree on the place, its appearance each season, following each development, from the stark, bare branches in winter - the tiny buds which began to swell and burst forth late leaves, as the warm sunshine of spring melted the snow and warmed the soil around its roots. This is the time when the robins and bluebirds came with their songs and cheer. Then in June came the long tasselled blossoms, followed by the barbed burs, and later, the early frosts of October burst these burs, exposing the deep-red fruit encased in velvet.

I recall the keen enjoyment we children used to have gathering chestnuts during the Indian summer season.

That part of the farm east of the creek was, in 1850, covered by forest. About 1862 Father built a saw-mill, and during the next half-dozen years cleared off this woodland. This mill was under the high bank along the creek directly east of the house.

In 1850 there were six of us young ones, but the other three appeared at almost regular intervals of two years.

Incidents relating to this family, although fresh in memory, even in many cases as to detail, are confused as to dates.

We were a happy family, always jolly, and each ready with assistance to any in case of need. Father was a busy man, and had little time to bother with us children until we were able to help him with his work. But Mother, busy as she was, always had time to enter into a confidential and sympathetic appreciation of our several needs and aspirations. We all

loved her - everybody did. As I recall her love and sympathy for us, her entire devotion to us in sickness and health, her untiring efforts in our behalf and the sympathy, confidence and love which pervaded the whole family while still unbroken, the tears well to my eyes as I write.

I pass to a description of Finch Hollow north of our place.

The next farm to ours was owned by Orin Bliss, an Old School Baptist, very punctilious as to the forms of religion but not averse to making money by devious means if necessary to get the money. He had four children, Caroline, Charles, Aaron and Maryett. The two younger children are still living in Binghamton, respected by all.

Next was a small place owned by Bill Barbour, a horse trader. He married a lady from Harpersfield way and they raised a family of four children, two girls and two boys, Anetta, Celia, Adelbert and George. Dell Barbour figured conspicuously as a ball player and as an organizer of the young home guard at Lambs Corners.

Bill Barbour was certainly a character. I never knew him to do a day's work, but he always had money. For years he regularly drove to "The Pint" or elsewhere in his open buggy almost every day, but he seldom came back with the same horse. I lost track of the family at the time of the war but I have seen the boys within the last few years.

Next to Barbour lived Russell Benjamin. In this family were three children, two boys about my own age and a girl considerably older, Susan by name. Susan was very good looking and for this reason a great favorite among the older boys. This family remained here but a few years and I have lost track of it entirely.

Next north lived Isaac Wright, owning the farm west of the road and to the town line, and the farm on the east was owned by Asal Benjamin, brother of Russell. In the Wright family were seven children, Isaac Jr., Ann, Arvesta, Caroline, Mart, Joe and Sarah. Mart is about my age. The mother is still living in the same house, aged ninety-nine, and up to a year or two since was in remarkably good health. Within the last five years I have seen her riding to town in the old-fashioned way, sitting on a sheepskin placed on a board across the sides of a lumber wagon, over the bed of which was spread a bundle of oat straw. One would surmise that the continual jolting of this conveyance over the ruts and stones which always were to be found in this Finch Hollow road would break the back of a healthy young person, and would cause the utter collapse of a centenarian, but it has been the custom of Mrs. Wright to ride to town in this kind of conveyance at least once a month during the last sixty years, to my knowledge. All the Wright children are still living. Mart and Joe look and act today just as they did fifty years ago.

The older Benjamin, who lived east of the Wrights, soon sold his farm to his son Samuel,

who married one of the Wright girls. They raised a large family, most of whom are still living in Finch Hollow.

We now come to the school-house, which stands on the southwest corner formed by the regular north and south road and the town line road leading between the Barnum neighborhood on the east and the Brockett Hollow neighborhood on the west.

The first farm north in the town of Maine is that formerly owned by Cornelius Schemerhorn. In this family were Cornelius Jr., Simon, and two girls, Janet and Nancy, one of whom married Ira Finch.

It had been the custom of old man Schemerhorn (always called Schemmy) as indeed of most of the other residents of Finch Hollow, to go to "the Pint" every Saturday, rain or shine. Saturday morning bright and early Schemerhorn would spread a bed of straw over the bed of his lumber wagon, load in a few bags of grain, place a short piece of board across the box or body of the wagon on which a hemlock-tanned sheep-skin would be placed. Then he would yoke up the oxen and proceed at a brisk walk to "the Pint". The grist would be taken to the Rock Bottom mills and ground in a couple of hours. In the meantime Schemerhorn had visited the post office, the Weekly Democrat printing office, and Joe Manning's oyster saloon for lunch. He had had a two gallon job filled with "Oh, be joyful" at Rexford's drug store, the oxen had eaten the small bundle of hay brought from home and his skin had been filled with several large portions of the aforesaid "Oh, be joyful". As night approached the oxen were again hitched to his wagon. Schemerhorn would take another drink from the job, rest his head on a bag of flour, cover a part of his anatomy with the sheepskin, start the cattle over Chenango River bridge towards home, and go to sleep. If he happened to wake up he would take more drinks. In the course of time the oxen would pull up in his front yard, say ten or eleven o'clock p.m. Cornelius Jr. or Simon would help the old man out and to bed, take care of the cattle and the grist, and the incident was closed. Every week within the memory of man this same program had been enacted. The oxen had successfully "turned out" to pass teams met on the road.

One dark Saturday night in November the usual course had proceeded without incident until the rig had reached a point at the steepest part of the dugway above Uncle Roe's place. A team was met and Schemerhorn's cattle turned out "to the right, as the law directs", but they had not taken into account that at this point several large rocks had ben promiscuously tumbled over the bank and were an obstruction to smooth travel. The jolting over these rocks had in some way detached the chain which fastened the oxyoke to the wagon. The wagon tongue dropped down and the wagon did not move but the oxen went on home and were duly taken care of by Simon. About daylight next morning the old man, nearly dead with the cold, slowly awoke, slowly raised his head and looked around, bewildered. He pinched his leg to make sure he was alive, and wondered who he was and where he was. In the dim light he could not recognize his surrounding. "Who am I, and where am I? Am I Schemmy, or am I not Schemmy? If I am Schemmy I have lost my oxen.

If I am not Schemmy I have found a wagon”.

A few years after this his oxen, in turning out to pass a team at the foot of the hill where the Oak Hill road forks from the Finch Hollow road, ran the wheels over a large stump. The old man was thrown out of the wagon and his neck was broken when he struck the ground. For years after this none of the young people dared to pass this point alone of a dark night.

Simon, the son, was also noted as a cooper in all that country. His shop was near the school-house and many times, as a boy, have I spent the noon recess watching him make oak firkins, which were then in great demand by dairymen.

Simon had very large feet, and I used to wonder if mine would grow to be so large when I had attained his age. He went up to Fish's Boot and Shoe Emporium one day to get a pair of boots. Fish looked at his feet with some dismay and asked him what size he wore. Simon could not tell him. Fish got down the largest pair of boots he had in the store, but they were altogether too small. Fish suggested that he go to Cary's store and get a thinner pair of socks, come back and try on the box.

The next five places above Schemerhorn's and extending to the slope of Buck Knob were owned and occupied by the numerous Finch family. Nathaniel R. Finch occupied the adjoining farm to Schemerhorn's. He was noted as the most proficient profane swearer in existence. He married Lucy Chambers, a daughter of Uncle Joe Chambers, a resident of the River District. Mrs. Harmon, mother of my particular chum in Finch Hollow, was a sister, as was also Mrs. John Cortright, living near my Uncle Roe.

The Harmon place was immediately west of the Nathaniel R. Finch place and extended up onto Buck Knob.

Nathaniel R. Finch's family consisted of three boys and one girl, - Joe, Josh, John and Malvina.

Mrs. Harmon was a widow in 1850. Her children were Napoleon, Orlon, Solomon and Helmina. Orlon was the brightest of the family. He was a favorite of his grand-

father, Uncle Joe, and inherited his surveying outfit, and old fashioned surveyor's compass and a few abbreviated formulas for calculating surface dimensions. Orlon was also a favorite with his Uncle Amos, a bachelor who lived with his brother Ben on the bank of the river directly opposite Willow Point mills.

Nathaniel R. is still living at the age of eighty-seven, and when I last saw him he retained all his faculties except that of navigation. Rheumatism had crippled him in the legs.

Ira Finch and Munson Finch lived on a small place just north of Schemerhorn's and east of Nathaniel R. Alpheus owned a large farm in the basin which forms the head of Dry Run Creek, east and northeast of Nathaniel R. Alpheus was the father of Cal, Rufus, Ira, Theron and Mary, all intelligent and witty. Alpheus died in 1852, I think, and Cal and Rufus lived for a number of years with their mother on the old place. Theron at twenty-two went west and became wealthy as a rancher and town-site manipulator. Mary married Jesse Tyler. They soon moved to Brooklyn, New York, where they still live. Cal, Rufus and Ira went west, and I am told became substantial citizens of Iowa.

East on the town line road lived a family named Austin, and west on the Hill lived Addison Wright, a substantial citizen who raised a large family. Amy and Ruth and George came to school.

Then north of Ad Wright and adjoining the Harmon place lived John Carnine, the father of a large family of promiscuous children. (I don't vouch for the adaptability of that word, but it accurately describes the Carnine young ones).

Since the time of which I write, many, many changes have taken place. My father's farm is now owned by Frank Finch, a son of Munson. The Brown farm is owned by Munson, who is still living, aged about eighty-five. The Orin Bliss farm is owned by a grandson, the Barbour place by one Johnson, the Asel Benjamin place by Mart Houghtaling, who married Sarah, the youngest Ike Wright girl. The Schemerhorn place is owned by my neighbor, Alanson W. Carley, the Alpheus Finch place by Malvina Benjamin, daughter of Nathaniel R.

No history of this kind can be complete without a love story, and I have it:

Lettie Rexford was a sweet girl who was always sought after by the boys of several neighborhoods in the vicinity of the "Ashery". She was good looking, and did not know it. At apple cuts and all parties where young people congregated the young man who succeeded in getting Lettie for a partner or the privilege of seeing her home was the envied one. If she favored any one, or allowed her affections to rest on any particular one, nobody knew it but herself. She was always jolly, a sweet singer, could entertain the company any time by a well delivered recitation. She seldom went twice in succession with the same young fellow.

Charley Fairchilds was an active, manly young man, who had plenty of friends. He lived with his father on the farm a little way up the Choconut Creek, and was a favorite with everybody.

The Civil War came on, and volunteers were called for. Charley was among the first to enlist in the 27th New York. Enlistment in the army played havoc with the social functions of our whole town. The young men, with their smart uniforms, were gathering in every

center and drilling daily. Tearstained cheeks of girls could be seen almost wherever a girl could be seen.

Charley once or twice had been to call on Lettie and finally had gone off to the general rendezvous at Elmira, but Lettie had kept on in the even tenor of her way, and if she cared particularly about his going nobody knew it.

After a few months' drilling by regiment and brigade, orders came for the 27th to get ready to move to Washington. Charley got a short furlough and came home. A celebration of some kind was taking place in Binghamton and Charley, as an old soldier, was asked to come up and manipulate the cannon. His patriotism would not permit him to refuse, though he would have much preferred to remain with friends at home for the short time he could remain.

The cannon had thundered most of the day, and the populace had applauded itself hoarse. A parting salute was to be fired. Charley was ramming home the charge, when by some carelessness of the man handling the fuse a premature discharge occurred. Charley was thrown fifty feet away, and although he was still alive, he was minus both arms, one ear, both eyes, and his face was horribly mangled. Tender hands picked up what was left of him and laid him on a blanket. Surgeons were sent for, but they only shook their heads. "Make him as comfortable as possible, but he can't live". The news spread rapidly, and within an hour a carriage drove up and from it jumped a beautiful young woman. She inquired, "Where is he!" Men with gentle force tried to lead her away, saying "You can do nothing". "Come away". But Lettie would listen to nothing. She insisted on seeing him at once, and she did. There was no outburst of unavailing tears, but a firm insistence on her doing what could be done for her dear love.

He was removed to the hospital, she by his side, and she remained there. It was many days before he regained consciousness, and many months before his wounds healed, but Lettie was by his side all the time to anticipate any want. When he finally recovered there was little semblance in this horribly mutilated creature to the handsome soldier boy who had left her the morning of the celebration. A happier bride than Lettie never in our county made the response to the preacher's inquiry, "Will you, in sickness and health....." "I will".

Their friends were everybody. They lived for years in a handsome cottage situated on a beautiful lawn at West End on the main road, opposite Biglers switch. Lettie was constantly by his side. A halo of happiness and pride in him was always with her.

The Crocker young ones were for some reason very unpopular in the Finch Hollow school for two or three years after the new school-house was used. There may have been two reasons for this: (1st) We were interlopers from the comparatively aristocratic "River

District”, and (2) We were all “easy to learn”, and compared as to age were away ahead of the natives in proficiency. We were not at all aggressive, but there was a feeling of jealousy and we were snubbed on all occasions. I did not care at all about it for myself, but I had several delightful scraps in behalf of my little sisters, whom I thought as good as anybody, and insisted on their being treated fairly.

I am glad to say this feeling of jealousy wore off after a time, and for a number of years before the war the Crocker young ones were welcome anywhere at any time. Orlon Harmon was an exception to the rule from the beginning. I do not remember the time when we were not comrades. He was very ambitious to get ahead in his studies and took every occasion to visit me at my home, where Mother always welcomed him and was glad to lend him her books. I used also to go home with him often.

His mother was a widow, of a kindly disposition, and seemed glad to have me come. I recollect my first visit there, when Mrs. Harmon nearly frightened me out of a year's growth by catching hold of my right arm at the supper table and saying, in staccato voice, “Don't do that, child; you'll spoil them”. She had hot soda biscuit for bread, and I was in the act of cutting one in half with my knife. I have learned since that this makes them heavy.

Pole Harmon was a tall, dark complected young man who kept himself aloof from the rest of us and seemed glad he was not in our class. A few years later he lost an eye by the premature discharge of a blast in his father's well on the Brown farm! Pole worked for Father a good deal. He was a black haired, swarthy young giant, taciturn always, but with a bright eye and full of quiet humor, and a great student. He started out to make a success in life, and did it. He is now a wealthy and respected citizen of Oneonta, New York, and has always been my friend. Solomon, two years younger, was about my age, and it was said of him that he used to be homely till the lightning struck him once and a horse kicked him twice in the face. He certainly was the most ungainly fellow, boy or man, I ever saw. Some time along in the '50s he lost a hand by the bursting of a gun while he and Josh Finch were celebrating the fourth of July. And as to Helmina, the youngest, whatever good looks had been reserved for the family had been exhausted before she was reached.

The family was poor, but Orlon was ambitious and worked out every summer and studied every winter. Two or three summers he worked for Father and one summer for Jim Carver. He was a good, faithful hand, always in demand.

Ann Richards kept school several terms in Finch Hollow, and she seemed to take great pride in assisting Orlon and me to acquire a higher education. Under her tuition I think we succeeded in getting over to the 50th page in algebra. Ann finally got ambitious herself and went to Chicago, where she got a good position in the city schools. After a time she married a Board of Trade man, raised a family, and is still living in that city. After Ann Richards left we had some indifferent teachers. I was sent to the Seminary and Orlon studied by himself, geometry, logarithms and a lot of other things too deep for me. He fitted up a room

at his Aunt Cortright's and it was a great delight to me to visit him there and have him explain the intricacies of trigonometry and surveying. His room was the cosiest place!! About the size of an eight-leaved dining table. One quarter of this space was occupied by his bed, an eighth by a high-backed wood-box, an eighth by a home made writing table over which was spread a newspaper, and a sixteenth by a box stove and two lengths of pipe (all of which he had brought down from home under his arm when he moved), one sixteenth by a splint-bottomed chair which I think I donated, and the balance was unoccupied space, except when he had company, and he could not have more than one person at a time to visit him. Many times during the two winters he was studying there I came down to spend Saturday night and Sunday with him, and we both enjoyed it immensely. I had bought a second-hand Webster's unabridged with one cover, which was kept on his table. He had fixed up a cute little bracket on the side wall which was just large enough to hold a small iron candlestick. Speaking of enjoyment, we had it! Of course there were some little inconveniences. One was the presence of smoke in his room when the wind was wrong, and it happened to be wrong most of the time. His two lengths of stovepipe and an elbow which I forgot to mention connected his stove with the outside world through a seven by nine inch space in the one window, from which a pane of glass had been removed. When the wind was in the east or when it swirled around the corner from the west or when it came from the north, the draft from the stove worked reversely. However, there is no rose without a thorn, and this we realized.

Our education progressed, and we did not care whether school kept or not.

Singing School in Finch Hollow

The want of good vocal music was sadly felt in Finch Hollow, especially in religious meetings. Elder Walton, a full faced, loud voiced local preacher who held religious services every alternate Sunday in the school-house and who annually held revival meetings in the same place for a month or more, according to his success in getting converts, was considered a good hand at talking and in prayer, but he could not sing, at least not well. Josh Finch said "He could sing as well as a cow", but this proficiency neither satisfied himself nor the congregation.

Mrs. Ledbetter usually led the singing and was followed in a desultory manner by Orin Bliss, Mrs. Barbour, and a few others. Mrs. Ledbetter's voice was cracked and besides she knew only one hymn tune, Old Hundred, and as a result of the failure to mark time, those who assisted were from four words to a line and a half behind her in finishing. This condition of things was disheartening to the preacher, especially in revival meetings.

It was thought best by all that a strong effort be made to educate the young people in this branch.

Nobody had ever attended singing school except Jim Clark, who had worked one season for Sol Delano on Nanticoke Creek, two miles above Maine Village.

In this immediate neighborhood lived Chester Marean, father of the present Supreme Court Judge J. Taylor Marean, now living and serving in Brooklyn, New York.

Chet Marean, as he was called, was leader of the choir in the Baptist Church in Maine Village, and had taught singing in that village, Ketchumville, Lambs Corners, Glen Aubry, Union Center and other places, and Jim Clark had heard him sing and had also attended his school as a spectator, so Jim was delegated to see Chet Marean and ascertain if his services could be secured to teach a class in Finch Hollow. Jim soon reported that Marean would give lessons one night in the week during the late fall and winter in our school-house at \$2.00 per pupil, providing the \$2.00 was in sight. A subscription paper was at once circulated and the required amount pledged. Father subscribed \$2.00 for all his children, Orin Bliss fifty cents, Bill Barber \$3.00, the two Benjamins \$1.00 each, Simon Schemmerhorn ten cents, Nathaniel R. \$2.00, several other Finches \$1.00 each; others, amounts between these extremes. Alanson Pardee would give nothing. He did not believe in such foolishness. Orr Harmon subscribed \$1.50 but I was always sorry for him because he did not get the worth of his money. I never knew him to sing a correct note in his life. I may say here that Finch Hollow was not a musical neighborhood.

The only musical instruments in the whole settlement were eight fiddles and three hundred and forty-seven jews-harps. Everybody could play "Old Zip Coon" on the jews-harp and the usual way was to commence in the middle of the tune and play both ways.

The singing school was assured. The first lesson was to be given on the following Friday evening. The day was exceptionally inclement for the time of year, a cold rain in the forenoon changing to a boisterous sleet storm and blizzard by nightfall. This made no difference. Jim Clark was on hand early. He had closed the blinds and built a roaring fire in the Franklin stove. No matter how cold and dreary it was outside, all was warmth and cheer within.

Chet Marean was on hand at early candle light and so was everybody else, including a delegation from Oak Hill. The school-house was crowded almost to suffocation. Almost everybody had brought a candle and there was the greatest variety of candle-sticks sitting along the long writing desk, which occupied three sides of the room, ever collected in that place. Each family had also brought a tin lantern perforated with round and elliptical holes, through which a dim light exuded. These holes had been arranged in circles, stars, squares or crosses, according to the fancy of the maker, and the artistic effect from the row of these lanterns standing in the entry was remarkable at least, kaleidoscopic

in the extreme.

Marean threw open the door for a moment to get a breath of fresh air. Those who were to take part in the singing and to become scholars were requested to take seats on the movable benches just back of the stove, and all others were requested not to whisper or annoy the scholars by shuffling their feet or otherwise distracting attention from the work in hand. Marean mounted the platform back of the flattopped teacher's desk, and arranged the dozen or more candles in such a manner as not to obstruct his view, then rapped for order. Immediately the hum of voices was hushed and strict attention was given him by all. He asked all present who could sing by note to please raise their right hands. Not a hand was raised. "All who would like to become good singers please raise your right hand". Every right hand in the room was up in a jiffy. Marean gave a short lecture on the art of singing and hoped before the term was over Finch Hollow would be able to show a score of good singers with cultivated voices.

Rapt attention was given to every word and movement. He took from his vest pocket a small tuning fork, struck it lightly on the table, held it to his ear and hummed in a low tone "Sol fa re mi do". This tone "do" was the key which he sounded clearly in a melodious voice and requested the school to follow him, being careful to "all get the pitch". The result was surprising at least, I might say absolutely astounding!! Such a conglomeration of discords never before was heard!!

Those in the audience who had come simply for entertainment immediately put on their top coats and hats and started for home. Simon Schemerhorn arose with the rest to go, but he did not put on his hat for the reason that he had failed to remove it when the school was called to order.

The exit of these barnacles in a measure relieved the congestion. Those who remained could at least take a long breath without unduly crowding their neighbors. Order being again restored, Marean drew a treble clef on the blackboard, lettered the lines and spaces, explained as best he could to the comprehension of this class the different keys, and for the remainder of the session exercised the class in singing the scale. At the close everybody was tired, but we felt that we were making progress and after Marean had sung in a fine voice a beautiful selection from a note book we were all glad we were there.

Of course, we must have note books. Marean recommended The Shawmut, probably because it was as good as any, and further for the reason that the publishers of this gave him a larger commission on sales.

Marean was regularly in attendance during the winter and until the subscription fund was exhausted.

I am glad to say for the first term some of the school made excellent progress and Marean was so popular as a teacher that next winter he not only served us but he organized a school on Oak Hill at Chocomut Center.

When I was about fourteen years old one R.H. Curran of Rochester, New York, a general agent for some publishing house, placed in our county paper, the Weekly Democrat, a seductive advertisement calling the attention of young men to the certain big money in selling by subscription a work for which he was the sole agent, Beach's Family Physician.

This work was to supplant entirely all regular physicians, who only prescribe drugs to their patients to aggravate and continue disease indefinitely. Every family knows how expensive doctors' visits are.

Dr. Beach was referred to as "the benefactor of mankind", who after 40 years' experience had compiled a work containing over 1,000 recipes using only the most common herbs, and which could be relied on to relieve and permanently cure all diseases and ailments to which human flesh is heir, from chicken pox to fevers, consumption, childbirth and broken necks.

It was represented that thousands of young men in different parts of the country (of course under Mr. Curran's supervision and direction) were making fabulous salaries and that heads of families were in effect tumbling over each other with five dollar bills in hand to secure this invaluable work.

"A few desirable towns and villages have been reserved for the energetic young men of Broome County. Apply at once, before the territory is all covered."

Father in buying the Brown farm had covered his property with a mortgage, and this was my opportunity to lift it. I called Mother's attention to this opportunity, and asked if I could apply for a portion of the reserved territory without delay. Mother resolutely put her foot down on the whole proposition, and asked me to remember that she would only advise me for my own good.

For a couple of weeks I moped around, dissatisfied with the monotony of farm life and was really losing my usual cheerful demeanor. I am sure Father and Mother conferred as to the matter. One morning after breakfast Father said "Let the boy go; it will do him good to rub up against the world, - it will take some of the conceit out of him." It was finally arranged that I might see Mr. Curran and take an agency near home. I found that the only remaining territory in our county was the town of Sanford in the eastern part of the county, 30 miles away. I accepted this at once and paid \$5.00 for a sample book, entered into a solemn contract to canvass thoroughly the whole town, not to sell a copy for less than the regular price (\$5.00) and I was to receive a commission of 40% on all sales. It was with

much impatience that I waited until the middle of the next week till Mother could provide a new suit of clothes, several pairs of stockings, shirts, et cetera.

I had studied the situation on the map and decided to locate at McClure's Settlement, some six miles west of Deposit, a thriving railroad and lumbering town on the Delaware River, also partly in the town of Sanford. I had also found that the cheapest and nearly as quick a way to reach McClure's Settlement was by stage via Windsor and Alexanders Lake, which stage left Way's Tavern in the eastern part of Binghamton, near Brandywine Creek, at six in the morning.

Father provided me with \$25.00 for expenses and Mother insisted on driving me up to Ways the evening before. She arranged with Sanford Jarvis, proprietor of the stage line, for a comfortable seat on the trip and saw me comfortably located in one of Mrs. Way's best rooms, helped take my carpet bag (a genuine carpet bag) to this room, and we sat down to talk it over. Mrs. Way brought in a candle. There was no reason why Mother should remain longer, but she did, for an hour or more. She held my hand and kissed me often, giving me much good advice, warning me of the temptations to smoke and drink and other wicked things which would surely come to me. She hoped whenever I was tempted to do anything I felt she would not approve I would stop and reflect that I, as the oldest of the family, was looked up to by all the other children. And how glad Father and she would always be to know I was growing up to be a manly man. I promised her she need never fear I would do aught to bring the blush to her cheek or sorrow to her heart. She kissed me again, ordered her horse and started for home, and I went back with her as far as Tom Allen's toll gate at the east end of Chenango Bridge. Here I alighted while she drove on alone through the darkness to the Finch Hollow home, five miles away. At several points on this bridge whale oil lamps in glass cases had been placed. Mother did not look back, but I watched her till the darkness west of the bridge engulfed her, and as she passed each lamp I could see that she held her handkerchief to her eyes. Then and there occurred my first attack of home-sickness. I loved my mother, my brothers and sisters, my home, and this first going away from it all was disheartening in the extreme in my loneliness among so many happy strangers. Had it not been for the solemn contract before mentioned and the further fact that everybody in Finch Hollow knew that "Arth Crocker is going to sell books in Sanford and leaves Thursday" I should have thrown up the job and followed Mother home, but I felt my honor was at stake in this contract and I could not endure the look of scorn which would surely reach me when Josh Finch would report that "Arth Crocker ain't got no sand; he can't get away from his mother's apron strings." So I braced up, walked back to Way's Tavern and went immediately to my room and to bed. I left the candle burning for company but I could not keep back the tears. I cried for an hour, when Mrs. Way came in to see that I was comfortable for the night. She raised the window a couple of inches and no doubt surmising the cause of my tears, kissed me herself and went away.

Next morning we were up by day-break and had an early breakfast. Mrs. Way herself waited on me and no doubt was glad to note that I was cheery and bright-eyed.

The stage ride was without incident except that it was intensely interesting to me. The road leaves the river four miles east of Binghamton. At this time the country through which we passed was sparsely populated. Roads were hilly and rough. A narrow dugway had been chiseled out of the rocks along the side of a very steep hill in the woods east of the Dwight place. The time of year was June, when nature had clothed forest and field in brightest green. Birds in great variety were enjoying the bright sunshine, flitting here and there apparently without motive and expressing their delight in songs of exultation. We again crossed the Susquehanna River at Windsor, a busy hamlet seventeen miles from Binghamton via stage route and nearly forty miles by road following the valley via Great Bend and Lanesboro.

The country was still more wild east of Windsor, - heavy timber and fewer farms. Alexanders Lake or Pond is located on a high plateau between the Susquehanna and the Delaware Rivers just in the edge of the town of Sanford. At this time there lived here the Guernsey family, father, mother and two sons. This family afterwards became famous locally as singers. They gave concerts in various towns and cities in central New York and acquired a good deal of money thereby.

I afterwards boarded with the Guernseys and the boys and I became great friends. I was much interested in an experiment they undertook. It was to light their house by gas gathered by means of a large inverted funnel held in position over a marshy part of Alexanders Lake. Whenever the mud and ooze in this marsh was disturbed, bubbles of gas would come to the surface and rise into the air. This inverted funnel would gather the gas which, allowed to escape through a small opening, would burn with a bright, continuous flame if the supply was kept up. To raise the funds necessary to procure pipe and convey the gas to the house was the first incentive to give singing concerts for money. I think the experiment with this gas was never a commercial success.

About the middle of the afternoon the stage arrived at McClure's Settlement. I arranged for board with a Mrs. Colvin at 10 cents per meal and lodging, and as I succeeded in selling Mr. Colvin a book that afternoon I felt I was on the high road to success. Up to the next week Friday I had sold only five books all told, and none the last two days. When Friday night set in dark and rainy I could hardly wait till morning to start direct for home. I just could not stand it any longer without seeing Mother and my brothers and sisters. At daylight I was on the road to Deposit where I arrived at 7:30. I went to the New York and Erie House and almost cried in the office when I learned there was no train till 10:15. This arrived and in due time I landed in Binghamton, went to Way's Tavern for dinner where a night of cheery Mrs. Way in a measure relieved my despondency. After dinner I strolled down town and met Jack Richards and Orr Harmon. We three took in Dan Rice's circus which was in town. Seeing these boys and others from near home cheered me up wonderfully and when night approached we walked home. I was feeling so well when I reached home that I could frame no excuse for being there. Mother welcomed me and all

my brothers and sisters were as glad to see me as if I had been the fatted calf instead of the prodigal. The next week I went back to Sanford and took hold of the work with vim and really sold in the town one hundred copies of the book, which was a phenomenal record. But I did not like the business and all Curran's blandishments could not induce me to continue with him. I did nothing more in the book business for over two years.

One day I received a polite note from J.G. Holland, who stated that he represented the publishing firm of J.W. Bradley and Company of Philadelphia, that he was general agent in charge of the canvassing department, that he was making headquarters at the Lewis House, Binghamton, and would be glad to have me call and look over his list and samples. He understood that I had had experience and success as a canvasser, and felt confident he could offer me such inducements with his house that I would be glad to accept a position with him. I replied that I was very busy on the farm with my father and that I did not like the business anyway.

Within the next few days I got other notes from him to please call anyway. I was hauling wood to Almstead Foundry near the Lewis House and having to make two trips per day, five miles, load and unload four cords of wood, and had no spare time. However, I tied my team to a post in front of Middleton's Lumberyard one day, walked across the street to the Lewis House and asked the dapper clerk if Mr. J.G. Holland was in. He glanced at my soiled clothes, noticed that my trouser legs were inside the legs of my cowhide boots and remarked, "I guess it won't make much difference to you if he is." I showed him Mr. Holland's invitation and he reluctantly rapped on Holland's door and said "A country pumpkin out here says you asked him to call." "Who is it?" "Says his name is Crocker." "Show him in at once, please."

With much disgust this clerk ushered me into Mr. Holland's apartments a suite of rooms on the first floor, and I must say I was astonished to behold the luxury in which he lived, - soft carpets, lace curtains, up-holstered furniture. In the center of the reception room was a large round table on which were arranged in a tasteful manner a large number of books neatly bound in cloth, morocco and Russia leather, gilt edges and gilt lettering. Mr. Holland advanced and shook my hand and asked me to be seated in one of his magnificent chairs. I felt as much at home as a lobster would in a coal bin, but Holland at once put me at my ease. He showed me his most attractive books and offered me commission on sales ranging from fifty to eighty per cent. I soon excused myself. I did not like the business and refused all his offers. Holland asked me not to give my final answer that day but to carefully consider his offer for a few days and call again. Not hearing from me for a week he hired a livery rig and started out to find me. Driving out Main Street for a couple of miles he met Dan Butterfield on the road. Holland said, "Can you tell me sir, where Mr. Crocker lives?"

"Crocker? Which Crocker do you want to find? The woods is full of 'em down below here."

"I don't know what his given name is but he is a young man who has taught school some and sold books."

"Crocker keep school? Gad! I didn't know any Crocker knew enough to keep school. - Oh yes, you must mean Arthur, Sam's boy. I believe he does keep school and I heard he sold books. Yes you mean Sam's boy, up in Finch Holler."

"But where is Finch Hollow?"

"Don't know where Finch Holler is? Well, well. Go right down the road to Cap'n Tyler's, turn to the right under the railroad bridge and keep straight ahead for a little over a mile. Then you will see a white house, - only white house in Finch Holler. There's where Sam lives. Everybody knows Sam. Can't miss it. Yes, you mean Sam's boy. Good day," and he whipped up his horse and was off for town.

In due course Holland arrived at our place. Mother directed him down the lane past the mill and to the "foller" where Father, George Henion and I were getting out wood. I positively refused to go again into the book business on commission. Holland finally offered me \$30.00 per month and expenses, paying salary and a liberal amount for expenses in advance. I referred him to Father. He did not want me to go, but finally said "Let the boy do as he chooses." I yielded to Holland's persuasions and agreed to go with him for the balance of that year.

He sent me again into the town of Sanford which I canvassed for Fleetwood's Life of Christ. I worked hard and again had phenomenal success. Within three months Holland voluntarily advanced my salary to \$50.00 per month and Mr. Bradley met me in Deposit and gave me a fine silver watch and gold chain, both of which were destroyed when Father's house burned in '58. I worked for Bradley for nearly two years. I never liked the business, however, and finally left it for good.

Brownell Brown was a phlegmatic Presbyterian and a carpenter. He lived on Oak Hill and had had experience in catching sheep with gloves on. He was on his way to the Barnum neighborhood by a direct cross country cut from his home. He carried a kit of carpenter's tools suspended down his back from an adz across his shoulder.

Brownell was slow spoken and very deliberate in all his ways.

His course this day took him over my father's farm, and incidentally over the upper end of the newly plowed flat below the saw-mill.

It was a beautiful spring day and Cal Finch and I were working like beavers to finish

planting this field with potatoes before night, as so bright a day at that time of year was considered a weather breeder, and when rain came the ground might not be in fit condition again in two weeks.

Brownell saw us and noting our work, halted in amazement at our temerity in planting potatoes while the moon was in its first quarter. As we passed him, at the same time passing the time of day without halting in our work, Brownell remarked, "Mr. Finch, I see you don't plant your potatoes in the right moon."

"No sir, we plant them in the earth. We think they grow better."

The day was warm, and one of near a fortnight of good hay weather.

Squire Jesse Richards, his boys, Dan, Matt and John, two hired men and I had been busy all the morning mowing down on the flat, and just now we were resting under the shade of the apple tree near the well, waiting for the call to dinner which was being prepared by Mrs. Richards and the girls.

The Squire was watching the weather closely, being anxious to get several loads of hay into the barn that afternoon. An effeminate looking Colporter came briskly up the path from the bridge, carrying a shiny grip sack and a Chesterfieldian air.

As he turned into the dooryard he dispensed numerous bows and smiles and asked for Mr. Richards. Somebody pointed to the Squire, who was just then reposing on the broad of his back, his head elevated slightly by the root of the apple tree. The Colporter immediately launched into his well learned story and during the next ten minutes threw off more language than one would suppose so small a man could get rid of in so short a time.

Taking from his grip a fine illustrated prospectus, he commenced his discourse.

"I represent the New York Bible House and am selling Bibles at less than half what any secular house can make them for. I will show you. This style, printed on the finest cream calendered paper, gilt sides and edges, bound in the most substantial manner, double spring back, finely illustrated, containing more than thirty engravings as you see; this life-like representation of the serpent tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden. The figure to the right is the serpent, and this to the left is Eve, and that fine looking, though somewhat scantily clad man in the background is Adam - could not be a finer picture. Next I show you a representation of Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel can easily be distinguished from the lions by the blue cotton umbrella under his arm. Here are others, thirty of them altogether, one of the finest gotten up Bibles in existence."

“In embossed Russia, I can furnish it at \$10.50; in red Morocco, this style, at \$9.00. Most everybody takes the Russia.”

The Squire who by this time had become thoroughly disgusted with his visitor, said “I have three bibles in the house now. I do not want any more.”

“But my dear sir, I know you have Bibles for your own house, but you have a large family of boys and girls who will soon be established in homes for themselves, and what neater or more appropriate present can a father make to his child than a well gotten up Bible, especially when it can be procured at such a nominal price?”

“Don’t want any.” insisted the Squire.

“Very well sir; I am glad to say that our catalogue contains also many valuable religious works which every Christian father should feel his duty to place before his children. Let me show you. Here is Fleetwood’s Life of Christ, containing also a history of the Jews. This invaluable work is printed on the best linen paper, bound in the most substantial manner. In antique Russia, gilt sides and edges, it makes a fine ornament for the center table. Very cheap at six dollars. In Morocco also in gilt sides and edges, at four fifty. In plain sheep, mottled edges, at two seventy-five, a very desirable style for those who buy for the reading matter only. Let me also show you this,”.

“I don’t want any books, young man, and I have no time to listen to you further; you couldn’t sell me a book if you stayed here a year.”

The Colporter was angry, and showed it in his looks and actions. He yanked open his grip sack, stowed away his samples and brought out a bundle of leaflets with the remark, “Well if I can’t sell you any books, I hope there is no objection to my leaving a few tracts.”

“Not at all, young man, the more the better, but be sure to leave the heels toward the gate.”

Probably not three people in the town of Union know that the greater part of the oak timber going into the construction of the Monitor (which fought the Merrimac in Hampton Road) grew in this town, but such is the fact. James and Simon Bigler were heavy lumber dealers, having yards at Newburg and New York, and early in the Civil War they secured from the Government an unlimited order for first class oak and ash lumber cut to certain sizes. Their mill at Oakdale had by 1860 very nearly used up all the available pine timber, but there was still much oak and ash growing on the adjacent hills, and this contract with Uncle Sam enabled the Biglers to buy most of it for any reasonable price which might be asked. The Andrews boys, Allen, Miles and Alonzo, who had been

employed for years by Bigler about their mill, scoured the country from the Chenango River to Nanticoke Creek and succeeded in bringing to this mill many thousand logs of the finest ash and oak, the sawed lumber from which was shipped at once to New York via the Erie Railway. All the product of this mill was loaded on the cars at Bigler's switch, located where now is Lewis H. Brown's coal yard. Most of this oak was used by the Government in building gun carriages -- the very best went to the ship yards. The ash was used in the manufacture of ramrods for cannons.

This old mill has been out of existence for more than forty years and most of the busy men who waited on it and supplied it with logs have long since passed to their reward.

It would probably surprise any young man of this generation could he see the immense pine spar cut by Bigler within a stone's throw of where the Oakdale school-house now stands. This spar was ninety feet long, five feet in diameter at the butt and two feet at the top, and could this spar now be placed on end in Lestershire it would be twice the height of any telephone pole in the village and would tower twenty or more feet above the tallest tree. Bigler shipped it to New York and from there to London, England. It was on exhibition at the first world's fair in that city.

Centuries in time are required in which to grow these mammoth trees. A few years ago I saw one on the parliament grounds at Ottawa, Canada, a section of one of these cork pine trees seven feet in diameter and having 547 concentric rings. As each of these rings represents a year's growth, this tree was over 547 years old. Think of this for a moment, a growing tree 150 years before Columbus discovered America!

Probably the average age of the pine grown in this valley was over three centuries. It is pitiful when we remember that more than half of these valuable trees were utterly destroyed -- rolled into log heaps and burned in the early mad rush to clear land for farms.

After many years the excellent quality of the pine in this section became known to builders and lumber dealers in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, and to manufacture it into boards and plank, saw-mills were established along the river, to which were hauled only the choicest logs, one sometimes two, from a tree. The balance of the tree was rolled into the waste heaps and burned. This lumber was rafted down the river and sold to dealers at Marietta, Columbia and Port Deposit.

When the railroad came the activity in lumbering soon wiped out of existence all those forests of pine. Within my own remembrance vast forests of hemlock covering the slopes of the hills to the north and south of the river were ruthlessly destroyed for the bark used in tanning leather, while the trunks were left to rot.

The stumps of these pine trees were a great hindrance in farming, but it required powerful machinery to remove them. During more than a decade before the war, stump machines

were operated by contractors who also employed a gang of ten or more men with each machine and were busy on most farms in East Union. Stumps were raised from the ground, cleaned of the earth which clung to the numerous roots and utilized to make fences which certainly looked forbidding enough to frighten a vicious horse or ox. Only a few years ago many rods of stump fence marked the north and south bounds of the main street of Lestershire.

The mania for destroying the magnificent forests which covered a large portion of Broome County in 1850 and for clearing land to make farms pervaded the entire community in Finch Hollow at the time of which I write. At this day it is hardly conceivable that men could be so short sighted and foolish. Only the choicest cuts of pine, cherry, maple, oak and chestnut were saved for lumber and the balance of these stately trees were wantonly destroyed. Father built his saw-mill about 1852, primarily to manufacture lumber from his own lands, but when his land had been cleared he took in sawing for all the neighbors about. This mill was in active operation for about ten years, after which time there was not enough timber left in Finch Hollow to make a respectable hand spike.

Power for this mill was obtained from the creek, the water from which was diverted to a long race constructed along the steep west bank, and from this race to an over shot wheel at the side of the mill by a plank flume supported by several bents of upright timbers. The mill itself was built on a network of heavy timbers framed together and braced in every direction to give strength and steadiness. Connecting with the saw-mill was a substantial log way 75 feet long which led to the log yard containing half or three fourths of an acre, a circular piece of level ground surrounded by a steep bluff perhaps forty feet high. During the winter logs would be hauled on sleighs to the top of this bluff, and rolled promiscuously down it. By spring perhaps two thousand logs would be collected in this mill yard and along the bluff. Active operations in the mill would begin as soon as the snow and ice would melt and afford sufficient water to turn the wheel. Then Father or one of the hired men would come with a yoke of oxen, axes, cant-hooks and hand spikes and fill the log way and again fill it when empty. The mill was primitive in every respect. The carriage was two grooved pine timbers about forty feet long placed upon two tracks of smoothed maple planks set edgewise through the middle of the mill four feet apart and projecting two inches above the floor. Placed upon the sides of the carriage was a heavy foot block of oak or maple securely attached to the north end of these sides, and a movable head block which could be placed at any other point on the carriage to correspond with the length of the log to be sawed. The carriage in position, a log would be rolled on it and set in proper position. The largest log could easily be moved sidewise by means of a mill bar, which was a heavy iron bar four feet long, flattened and curved at one end. Using this as a lever to raise the log, it could be easily placed in the proper position and securely held in this position by strong dogs attached to the foot and head blocks firmly driven into the end

of the log. Then the saw would be started and the first slab taken off. This saw was like the original mill saw, a plate of steel 1.4 inch thick, eight inches wide and nine feet long, attached to a heavy frame six feet wide and nine feet long in the clear, the saw held firmly in position in the center. The frame was placed between two perpendicular plumb posts and was so arranged as to work smoothly up and down in grooves attached to these plumb posts. The movement of this frame was about three feet up and down and the speed of these oscillations was governed entirely by the amount of water allowed on the overshot wheel, or the size and hardness of the log to be sawed. A primitive and ingenuous contrivance moved the carriage by means of a ratchet wheel, worked from the saw frame. The mill was run night and day so long as there was water and the stock of log held out, generally about three months in the year. The mill had few of the conveniences of the modern saw-mill. All work was done by hand and by main strength. Slabs were of no use and must be carried out to a pile below the mill and the boards, planks or framing timber must be carried to a platform east of the mill. After I was sixteen years old I became quite expert in running the mill and keeping the saw in order, and Father practically turned this work over to me. Generally I worked one "tour" alone and Cal Finch or Bob Brown the other. One tour was from twelve o'clock noon to twelve o'clock midnight and the other the balance of the twenty-four hours. The work was a man's work, and really too heavy for a growing boy. Father came along one day when I was sawing some rough logs, and noting that I was constantly busy and lifting beyond my strength, insisted that I should leave the heavy slabs for Bob Brown to remove. Bob and I were then running the mill. Father saw Bob and instructed him as he had me. A couple of tin lanterns hung in a place protected from the wind made a sorry light to run the mill by on a dark night, so we were in the habit of reinforcing this light by burning in an old kettle pine knots and other choice bit of "fat pine." A few of these knots would afford a bright blaze filling the whole mill with light and of course making things more cheerful.

The next noon when Bob came in to relieve me, he noted with much indignation a pile of a dozen overgrown slabs which I had left for him to take away. He immediately flew into a passion and lectured me severely on sawing slabs so large. In his anger he grabbed a short piece of siding and with an oily coal from our kettle wrote on it, "Don't saw no slab but what you can't carry." Calling my attention to this, he nailed it to the plumb post, that it might be in my full view whenever setting a log. Luckily there was never afterward any occasion for me to shift any part of my work onto Bob, but Father on hearing of the incident told Bob he could do the work like a man or quit the job.

Close adjoining the mill and to the south and extending on either side of the creek was a growth of heavy timber; stately dark green hemlocks with tough resinous bark, many of them dead at the top; sinewy yellow birches with round tapering trunks and the other bark detached and curled into soft fluffy bunches, beautiful sugar maples with white smooth bark and whiter wood, the whole fringed along the top of the bluff with wild sumac affording playing ground for numerous brown thrushes and cat-birds. Frequently in the early springtime, whenever I could have the assistance of brother Andrew or of our

neighbor boys, we would tap fifty or sixty of these maple trees and make a quantity of sugar in addition to running the mill.

Directly north of the mill was a flat containing eight or ten acres along the creek and an acre or two more extending to the top of the bluff covered thickly with a growth of young pine, maple, birch, beech, water beech and other varieties. This was a favorite haunt of the partridge, whose drumming could be heard any morning in early summer. Hundreds of robins would come in here for shelter against the blustering snow storms of March. There was no closed season in those days, and any day in spring or summer after the snow water had gone one could take the well proportioned home made fish pole to the creek and catch a mess of trout. One summer stories that wildcats and panthers were abroad induced brother Andrew to set traps for them in their supposed lurking place, this ten or twelve acres of undergrowth above the mill. Andrew's method was to tie a strong cord to the top of a stiff sapling, then by its own weight, assisted by a boy on the ground pulling on this cord, the top of the sapling would be bent over to the ground. This would be fastened to a lead-fall and all the limbs trimmed off the sapling. The theory was for a wildcat to walk onto this dead-fall, when presto!! he would be yanked into the atmosphere, this strong cord tight around his leg. His cries then would attract the hunter, when he could be easily shot and cut down. Several of these spring traps were set, but I don't remember that Andrew ever caught a wildcat. He did, however, succeed in snaring brother Silas by the off hind leg. The trap hauled him off the ground, but he caught hold of a bush with one hand and hollered for dear life. I happened to be in the mill yards, and suspecting the trouble, ran with an ax to Silas' assistance. If the situation had not been so serious it certainly could have been ludicrous, and I am not sure but it was anyway. The trap was pulling Silas into the air by his right leg and he was holding to the earth by his left hand. The unengaged arm and leg were vibrating in the air, giving him from the front and rear view the general appearance of a Rhode Island windmill. Silas was always getting into difficulties and Mother seemed to love him better on account of these troubles.

In those early days, "bees" of all kinds were in vogue. Logging bees, husking bees, barn raisings, wood chopping bees, and if by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause a farmer got greatly behind with his work the other neighbors would turn out; and I have known a whole haying to be completed in one day.

Refreshments were always provided by the recipient of these favors, the standard regulation being three gallons of whiskey and an elaborate dinner.

The women folks had quilting bees, and bees for making up garments for all the young ones of the household.

The young people were more interested in eight or ten apple cuts, which occurred every fall.

We always had one at our house, and so did most of the other neighbors. Twenty to thirty bushels of apples would be peeled, quartered, cored and strung in the early evening, after which a dance was always in order.

With three or four home made apple machines for peeling the apples, a company of forty or fifty girls and boys would be kept busy quartering and coring and stringing, and there was always a great rush to finish the work so the dancing could begin.

Dad Houghtaling was the fiddler of the neighborhood. Rufus Finch, my Uncle Levi, and Aaron Bliss were scrub fiddlers and either of these would act when Dad was engaged elsewhere. Dad Houghtaling married Trusie Andrews, and she would accompany him to these dancing parties. Dad was a master hand at managing these parties. He would "call off," as well as furnish the music. Everybody, old and young, joined in the old fashioned cotillion. In the large houses, sometimes three or four sets would be on at a time in two adjoining rooms, the fiddler sitting on a stool in the connecting doorway.

The upper story in the main part of our house was one large room finished with a smooth maple floor, on purpose for dancing, with movable benches on two sides. My father and my Uncle Eli were considered the two best dancers in all that country, and there was always a great rivalry between them for the applause of the assembled company whenever they were both present at a dancing party.

The cotillion partly delineated in the play "The Old Homestead" very closely represented the dancing parties in Finch Hollow fifty years ago.

The girls with fresh, animated faces were decked out in smart calico frocks, and the boys all wore "biled" homemade white shirts with frills over the whole front which would shame a present day Texas Congressman, red topped calfskin boots with high heels, and invariably with trouser legs tucked inside the legs of these boots. No coat or vest would be worn in the ballroom.

The sets formed, Dad Houghtaling would start a tune in four-four time and call "Honors to your partners" "First four half right and left" "Sides the same" "First four to places" "Sides the same" "Alamand left!"

A new tune in the same time would be started but a different change would be called, ending with "All promenade!"

After three or four changes would be danced with spirit Dad would start up "The Devil's Dream" or "The Soldier's Joy" or "Liverpool Hornpipe", for the last change. The call would be "Join hands and circle to the left" "Ladies grand change" "Ladies balance to the right" "Swing" "Balance to the next" "Swing" "Partners all" "Grand right and left" "All promenade and to your seats".

During all this last change all the young men would vie with each other in jumping the highest and spreading his legs over the greatest amount of space and making the most noise, and generally showing off his favorite steps. Every movement would be in time to the music, and before this dance would be over every dancer would be in a profuse perspiration. After two or three o'clock in the morning the dance would be over, everybody tired but happy. The utmost good feeling prevailed, and while boisterous and not so refined in deportment as the young peoples' gatherings of to-day, I have always held to the belief that the young people of those days enjoyed themselves better than the young people of today.

We were a happy lot of youngsters and would generally get together in some fracas of this kind at least once a week during the fall and winter.

Our house was a favorite place for these parties, as we had plenty of room, and Mother always provided a good lunch of delicious apple pie and cakes, which were passed around about twelve o'clock.

Joe Finch had a party on the occasion of his marriage to Emeline Benjamin and everybody had a good time. Nathaniel exhilarated himself with "Oh, be joyful" on this occasion. His tongue was very active, and his remarks caused a great deal of amusement. At supper he took it upon himself to see that all were provided. "Fry another herring, who cares for the expense".

He became disgusted with Simon Schemerhorn's lack of appreciation and said "Simon, you don't know as much as Conklin's bull".

J. Taylor Marean, who was teaching school in Finch Hollow that winter, asked Nathaniel to explain what lack of acumen Conkling's bull had shown.

"Why he swum across the river to get a drink of water".

While attending the Seminary I took up the study of natural philosophy and became greatly interested in it. The mystery of the syphon, the action of the tides, the wonderful effect of the sun's rays by reflection and refraction, the manner in which the weight of the atmosphere surrounding our planet was determined, the fact that "Water would always find its level", and many other to me unknown properties of matter.

I began to apply this knowledge in a practical manner, and by my experiments astonished the boys in Finch Hollow. I bought a sun-glass the size of a small saucer and was considered a magician when I lighted Steve Simmon's pipe with it one day, and burned the

hands of some of the incredulous with the same machine. I also astonished the whole neighborhood and myself with a fountain which I produced in the orchard back of our house by cutting the pump logs which had led the water from the never failing spring to our house. Father had substituted lead pipe for this line of pump logs.

I contrived a nozzle which, firmly plugged into an inch hole in these logs, threw a small stream twenty feet into the air. This fountain played continuously till late next spring. The shifting winds carried the spray over a considerable space and in the cold weather it froze as it fell and long before spring had formed a cake of ice twice the size of our house. As this cake of ice did not melt away till July the several apple trees which were encased in it were out of business for that season. Father wouldn't allow the fountain to play the next winter.

My brother Andrew also became interested in balloons and parachutes, and nearly lost his life trying to demonstrate that the parachute is a perfectly safe machine. He had made a huge umbrella, using a long fork handle for the stalk, to which was attached eight hickory bows twelve feet long. These were held in position by strong cords and the whole was covered with strong cotton sheeting. One day when Father and Mother were away Andrew insisted on trying his parachute by leaping from the peak of the barn into the barnyard fifty feet below. I tried to dissuade him from the attempt but he insisted, so I helped him bring the long ladder which took him to the eaves. He then scrambled up the roof and to the peak and lowered a string to me with which he hauled his machine up. He got it and himself in position and prepared to leap into the air. As a preliminary he repeated the verse,

“One two three,
The bumble bee.
The rooster crows
and away he goes.”

Andrew gave a tremendous leap but his machine did not clear the barn. It caught on the peak and he dangled in the air still holding to the fork handle. I was near frightened out of my wits but he was cool, and directed me to go up on the scaffold for straw. I never worked harder in my life, and succeeded in getting a large pile of it under him before he was compelled to drop. He came out of the experience without a scratch, but Mother would never let him try the experiment again.

My Aunt Irene bought for me a telescope which when extended by drawing out the six cylinders of varying sizes which gave the proper focus was about three feet long. It was a cheap affair, but produced astonishing results. It was a seven months wonder in Finch Hollow.

I am letting my memory take me back to an afternoon in July of 1856. If you have the time I would be glad to have you accompany me. We will take the telescope along and I can

assure you an enjoyable afternoon. The weather has been pleasant for two weeks, and today is the brightest of them all, not a cloud in the sky and not a breath of air stirring, and while it is very warm the air is pure. We will take our jaunt today because these conditions will not hold after today.

Mother has given us an early dinner. All the children except Millie, the baby and Sarah, who is playing with her on the lawn are away at school. Father, George Henion and George Eaglesfield are just driving down the lane on the hay rack to haul in wheat from the field east of the saw-mill. We stroll leisurely down the road and over the Big Bridge. Just past this east of the road is my grandfather McNally's house which Father built for him a few years ago. Grandfather is sitting in the yard in a chair tilted back against the large maple with his feet on the lower round reading the second volume of "Benton's Thirty Years in the U.S. Senate". He turns his head, lowers his spectacles half an inch down his nose, cleans his mouth of a very juicy quid of tobacco and cheerily invites us to come in and sit awhile. Aunt Irene is on the north porch spinning stocking yarn for Mother. She stops her work and also smilingly adds her invitation to take chairs on the cool side of the house. We cannot stop, but thank her just the same.

George Henion lives in the Brown house. Mrs. Henion and her half dozen children are busy about the house and garden. The children are a healthy lot but they don't get to school much. As we pass down the road past the Pardee place we see Alanson on his cobbler's bench pegging a pair of taps on Uncle Roe's boots. He says "Hello, Arth! Ain't you workin' this nice day?" I replied "No, I have half a day off." Mrs. Pardee, hearing voices, projects her head and part of her body out of an open window in an adjoining room but when she discovers it is only Arth, she ejaculates "Oh!" withdraws her body and her head follows. That morning she had been up to our house and asked Mother to send her twenty-three eggs. She had one, and wanted to make out a couple of dozen to send up town to get some tea.

We go on down the road to Bob Brown's house. Bob's house is built on a steep hill-side west of the road. The back sill rests on three flat stones placed upon the ground, and propping up the middle of the house are three sets of "cob house" blocks of various sizes and shapes. The front sill is seven feet above the ground, one end supported by two maple saplings and the other by a slender chestnut post, and the middle by a two-by-four hemlock scantling. Projecting out in the air towards the road is the front porch, which looked at from a few rods up the road has more the appearance of the arm of a derrick than a veranda. We pass through the gate which is always open and along the path past the house. Almira is sitting in a rocking chair on this porch, reading "The Hidden Hand" from the New York Ledger. She bows to us and we pass on, following the path to the spring at the foot of a long steep hill. We climb up the hill for fifteen minutes, loosening small stones in our efforts to get a foothold, which roll or slide to the bottom. We finally reach a fence bordering the upper side of this pasture and sit down under a small chestnut tree to rest.

Looking across the valley towards Jim Carmens' house a mile away we soon discover a dark moving object. We bring the telescope to bear on it and discover it to be a brindle calf with his tail festooned with burdocks. We continue our walk to the west and keep our eyes in that direction. When we reach the very top of the hill a broad meadow stretches out from us on the west and north. A large flat rock is here which we mount and turn our gaze towards the south. Spread out before us is a magnificent panorama. Nine miles of the valley of the Susquehanna which is here two miles wide is spread out before us in all its beauty. To the east, penned in by the rounding hills can be seen a few of the white houses of Binghamton peeping through the breaks in the foliage. Half a dozen church spires towering above all their surroundings point to heaven, the red brick business blocks of the village are hidden behind the Water Cure Property which extends from the flat up to the sides of Mount Prospect. The main road can first be seen where it comes over the Mileboard hill and if you are acquainted with the country you can follow it with your eye till it is lost behind the hills west of the Patterson House, nine miles down the river from the farthest easterly point in the valley which can be seen from our lookout. The patches of woodland showing various shades of green are interspersed with fields of growing grain, pastures in which are feeding herds of contented cattle, meadow lands with a yellow tinge from the many buttercups in them, while houses and brown barns, rail fences and stump fences separate the pastures from cultivated fields. Through this valley and skirting the hills of Vestal at the south of it winds the beautiful Susquehanna. Back of the river, far as the eye could reach rose hill after hill; not precipitous or rugged but sloping and rounded, cultivated on the sides and tops, fields of grain and grass interspersed with tracts of woodland. The view was and is imposing. If you are acquainted with the valley you will be able to locate every farm and residence. Starting at the west, the first building seen is the stately Judge Patterson mansion, standing out clear and distinct in the bright sunshine on a little rise of ground where the Main road skirts the river.

Next in order come the William Gray place, Arthur Gray, Colonel Oliver C. Crocker's brick mansion, and by the aid of our telescope a half dozen deer can be seen lying in the shade of a grove of stately elm and walnut trees directly south of the road. Next is the fine dairy farm of Lewis Holbert which extends from the river back to the top of the hill only a few rods from where we are standing. James Bloomer lives in a small house close by the point where the highway crosses under the Erie Rail- road. Next on a little rise of ground is the East Union House kept by Silas Tyler and close by is the residence kept by Abraham Tyler, directly opposite the road leading to Finch Hollow. Also near by lives Bill Allen, the famous owner of educated roosters. Next is my grandfather's place and a finer farm did not and does not exist. This extends up to the Choconut Creek which crosses the valley from "The Ashery". Directly east of the creek on the north side of the road is the Crocker burying ground and branching to the right is the River Road leading to Binghamton, three and a half miles away, following quite near the river. In the angle of these roads on high ground lives Squire Jesse Richards, the father of a family of bright children, Lib, Dan, Ann, Martin, Lucy, John, Olive, Helen and Bob. Along this River Road are Captain Bloomer, Ben Chambers, Clint Chambers, Joe Chambers, Josiah Allen and John St. John, owner of a

large farm just below the junction of the two rivers.

Returning to the Main road at Choconut Creek, one John Collins lives the north side of the highway, giving the name to a steep, gravelly hill. South on top of this hill lived my Uncle Oliver, next Frank Allen, Lany Allen, Mart Swift, Lewis Jameson, Andrew Cox, Elijah Brigham, Deacon Mathews, the Twitchels and many other families now forgotten except by the old-timers.

Before the survey of the valley is completed we notice in the distance over the hills to the southwest a puff of smoke which enlarges rapidly and rolls up to the sky with astonishing rapidity. What is it? A house burning? No! There is too much of it for one house! It may be a village! No, there is no village in that direction.

While we are studying over the matter other similar puffs of smoke arise in different points of the compass: Count them! Within fifteen minutes a dozen! Twentyfive! Thirty!! And more starting in all directions. They are burning fallows!! The late hot weather and this ideal day is what every man in the whole region who is clearing land has been waiting for!

Directly opposite us on the sloping side of Round Hill is a ten acre fallow from which the wood and logs worth hauling to the mill have been taken away during the last winter and spring. This lies brown in the sunshine. We bring our telescope to bear on it and discover half a dozen men and boys preparing to touch fire to it. All have gone to the center of the fallow, lighted their torches and are running in every direction, lighting the heaps of pine and oak limbs as they pass! Within five minutes the whole is a seething, crackling cauldron of flame. A magnificent spectacle indeed! One solid body of fire and flame, forced by the in-rushing air to the height of two hundred feet! Two and one-half miles away we cannot hear the roar, but the view of it is startling and magnificent! After half an hour the flame dies out and only a little white smoke rises from it! The smoke from all these burning fallows has spread out like a pall over the sky and during the night will fill the whole air, rendering it impossible to see any object half a mile away. This condition will last until the next heavy rain. When next we see this fallow its hue will be black as night, everything gone from the surface except the numberless blackened stumps. The fire has swept everything away. This spectacle and experience is one to be remembered. It cannot be seen in these latter days.

Convention in Finch Hollow

Ike Wright owned and occupied the first farm south of the school-house in Finch Hollow. He had a large family, but most of his boys were girls and not much help to him in his farming. In 1850 Mart and Joe, his sons, two sturdy youngsters, were living at home and were both good workers. That spring Wright planted ten acres of corn, and it was reported

he said to Mart and Joe, "Boys, I want you to take good care of that corn this summer, plow it out twice each day, hoe it well and keep the weeds down. If you are good boys and tend to the corn properly, along in the fall I'll take you up town and show you the candy." An inducement certainly. I think the boys earned the reward, for the corn was a good crop, but while he planted ten acres he only harvested about eight acres, and thereby hangs a tale.

Abe Schemerhorn that spring had the misfortune to lose one of his horses, which was promptly skinned and the carcass hauled out into the woods adjoining this cornfield. About three days later, and continuing for some time, it appeared that all the crows in Broome County and a large delegation from northern Pennsylvania held a mass convention in that identical piece of woods. The number of crows at that convention was past computation. I am sure there were more than a million. They not only made life a burden to the neighborhood by their incessant cawing, but they committed many depredations on the recently planted crops.

Wright's corn field seemed to have a peculiar attraction for them. They paid no attention to the hideous straw man, clothed in an old pair of patched trousers and a faded long sleeved overcoat, topped with a fifty year old beaver hat which had been kicked around the garret so long and stepped on so often that it had the general appearance of a dilapidated concertina; this Wright had set up in the center of the field for the express purpose of scaring crows. Before Wright had discovered their trespass they had pulled up every spear of corn on about two acres!!

Now, something had to be done, and that quickly.

He had an old Revolutionary musket which had done duty as an ornament in his home for a number of years. Originally a flintlock, it had recently been changed so that percussion caps were used to ignite the charge. The barrel was about eight feet long and the bore perhaps three-fourths of an inch in diameter. It was in appearance and in fact a formidable piece of artillery.

Wright was to be away from home most of the day but before he left he got down his gun, loaded it carefully with powder and large sized shot, gave it to Mart, and also the powder horn, the bag of shot, the box of caps and the greater part of an abandoned hornet's nest for wadding, with instructions to kill as many of those crows as he could, and to keep them out of the corn field at all hazards. Mart carried the gun and Joe brought up the ammunition. When the boys appeared in the corn field the crows all left, but the boys hid in a clump of bushes till the crows came back. Mart got a bead on a bunch which were lined up on a dead tree and pulled the trigger. The crows flew away unhurt, but the gun kicked and hurt his shoulder badly. He would not try it again but went away to the house for some arnica. Joe loaded the gun again, but when the crucial moment came his courage failed and he would not discharge it. Joe, however, enjoyed the experience of loading so in

the course of the forenoon he had added five more charges of powder and shot and wadding.

When Wright returned and learned from Mart that not a crow had been killed he was very angry. He shouldered the gun and started for the corn field in great dudgeon. Joe told him the gun was loaded and followed his father to note development. He had not long to wait. After a few minutes quiet in this same clump of bushes, the crows returned in numbers. Wright raised the gun to his shoulder and blazed away!!

The result was a surprise indeed!!

The recoil sent him whirling; the gun shot back, slipped by his shoulder and landed several feet away in the grass. Fortunately it did not explode or do Wright serious harm. Joe was elated. He said "Never mind, Father; try it again. There are five more loads in it!!"

I think the gun was afterwards only used to decorate the west wall of the kitchen. It may be there yet. Mart or Joe had to remain in that corn field until the close of that convention or until the corn had grown past its usefulness as food for crows.

Mart Wright lives on the old farm yet and looks as young as he did fifty years ago. Now what became of those crows I never knew, but I think some of them are living over in Vestal yet. If not the same, they look just like them anyway.

Preserved Pears

Mrs. Dunbar had just finished supper and was licking off her fingers when I sprung that story about the time the preacher took tea with Mrs. Alanson Pardee. "Who was Mrs. Pardee?" asked Frank. I explained that the Pardees lived in the second house on the lower side of the road as you go up into Finch Hollow -- the old Kimball place.

Mrs. Pardee usually had mush and milk for tea but on this occasion she put on a few frills; strained a point and provided cold chicken, bread and butter, three kinds of cake (including doughnuts), tea with sugar in it. Not catnip tea, nor sage tea, but read "boughten tea". Six shillin' tea, at that. And preserved Seacel pears. Mrs. Pardee put down a gallon jar of these which were prepared by boiling them in their own juice to which was added a quantity of brown sugar, making a thick, dark dressing which was real sweet and tasty.

This jar without a cover had been placed on a shelf in the cellar.

Mrs. George Henion was invited over to help entertain the preacher and to be enter-

tained by him.

The tea was more than half over. The preacher had been discussing the singing school which Chet Marean was conducting in the school-house that fall and winter. Everybody was having a good time. All were happy, especially the preacher who felt that the protracted meetings would be productive of more good when the young people had learned to sing by note.

The preserved pears were relished by all at the table. They were eaten by lifting them out of this thick dressing by the stem, and deftly swinging them into the mouth to be enjoyed at leisure as the substance of the pear melted away by pressure of the tongue and a gentle sucking process while the stem was pulled out and laid away on the bone dish.

The preacher had swung the third pear into his mouth, but there was some difficulty in removing the stem. Pull as hard as he would the stem would not come out and after a time with some embarrassment he was obliged to remove the whole pear from his mouth, which he laid down on the bone dish. He inquired of Mrs. Pardee if she had a cat about the house, at the same time calling attention to this pear - which was not a pear at all but a small mouse which had fallen into the jar in the cellar, and had been dished out as a pear without discovery.

A Morning in Finch Hollow

The big speckled rooster who spent the daylight hours in a dignified and painstaking effort to provide dainty morsels of food for his hen following had just finished his four o'clock serenade as we came down stairs, not yet fully awake. We speedily uncovered the bed of live coals in the great fireplace in the sitting room, and piling a number of small logs on the andirons we soon had a cheerful blaze which shed light and warmth throughout the room.

Leaving Mother busily preparing breakfast we pass out through the wood shed to the rain barrel just at the corner, beside which was a low wooden bench decorated with a tin wash basin and a bowl of soft soap. A dense fog filled the outside air, through which the increasing daylight percolated with difficulty. The time was early October, which in our climate brings cold nights, frequent frosts and a strong presentiment of the bitter cold to come after the Indian Summer.

A vigorous wash in the cold water from the rain barrel left us thoroughly awake and refreshed.

Breakfast over, we set out on a walk through the back orchard and to the hill pasture. The air was cold and damp, the heavy fog wetting our clothes almost as much as a light

drizzling rain. Ascending the steep hill we passed out of the fog long before we reached the top. Here we rested and turned towards the fast coming morning. The eastern sky was nearly covered with light, fleecy clouds which were moving slowly towards the coming sunshine. The lower valley was filled with heavy fog, its upper surface nearly level and extending two thirds to the tops of the hills. Above the fog the air was clear and pure, our vision could discern distinctly all objects for a distance of miles, but the fog was impenetrable to the sight. It looked like a sea of milk and hid everything beneath its surface. This sea invaded every nook and indenture in the hills, leaving points of land behind which were bays and coves but no islands. A small clump of majestic pines on the Dick Carver farm shoved their tops through this sea and in the twilight could be compared to the top masts of a sunken man-of-war. The whole scene was weird and ghastly. With the lower valley entirely shut out from view, only one thoroughly acquainted with the surrounding country could recognize the portion of the hill-tops in view.

Suddenly the rising sun broke through a rift in the clouds when a panorama magnificently grand and beautiful burst upon our view. Half the colors of the rainbow were spread upon the clouds from the distant eastern horizon nearly to the zenith. Red and green and dark purple were intermingled in decorating the sky. No painter's brush has yet reproduced the dazzling beauty of this morning picture. Words fail to convey the rapture of this experience. After a few minutes the picture was gone, not to return again perhaps for months.

While we were lost in wonder the advancing sunshine gilded the trees at the summit of the western hills, the shadow moving rapidly downward, and before we were aware of it our lake of milk was touched by the sunshine and for an instant was turned to burnished silver.

While we were looking at it it began to dissolve. As the air grew warmer the fog seemed to evaporate or to rise in diminishing clouds, and float away to the east. In a short half hour the whole bank of fog had disappeared. Where a solemn stillness reigned an hour ago, now began to awake the sounds of morning.

From the forest east of the creek came the sound of the ax felling trees or preparing wood for the market. From down the valley could be heard the plaintive voice of a boy calling "Co, bos, Co, bos, Co, Co!" Wreaths of thin, vapory smoke were curling from every chimney in sight.

Below was a small flock of blackbirds circling in the air, each individual following his leader with rhythmic precision. Soon they alighted in a "spreading chestnut tree" and immediately began moving by twos, fives and tens to a nearby wheat stubble for their breakfast.

After another week, all these family flocks will have joined together in a large procession

and the whole body will move south for the winter, returning the next Spring in pairs. A few robins and bluebirds were seen, all moving south.

Verily all the amenities of life are not to be found in the crowded cities. The dweller in the back country has an opportunity to commune with nature, which is not enjoyed by those who follow the strenuous life of the populous centers. In the country the early riser and he who has the ability and inclination to cull from nature her wonderful music, her display of colors, the symmetry and perfection of all her works, - such a one need not envy the so-called more fortunate possessor of wealth in gold and houses and ships.

The spring of '62 opened with great activity in military circles.

Volunteers for the Army were being enlisted in every town. Several of the boys from Finch Hollow were serving in the 27th New York.

Early in March, Peter Wentz advertised in the Democrat for men to work on military railroads in Virginia for the Government offering 90 cents per day, free transportation and rations. These employees would be civilians and could quit the service at any time.

The proposition seemed attractive to my mother, who immediately called on Mrs. Richards. These two evolved a plan to induce John Richards and me to apply for this service, no doubt feeling that a few months' trial would satisfy us that there is no place like home. John and I called on Wentz at the Globe Hotel, Binghamton, and engaged to go with his party which would leave for Washington five days later.

It soon got noised around that Arth and John were going to work for the Government in Virginia and others wished to join us. Wentz urged us to bring all the boys we could, and when the time came for us to start, fifteen sturdy young country boys from Finch Hollow and the River District were in our party. About 250 men filled the special cars provided for Wentz's party. Our party of 15 men were clean, respectable boys, but a large percentage of the others were thieves, cut-throats, gamblers, sots, or tramps. We were thoroughly disgusted with the company we were in, but decided we would not back out now.

How well I remember the incidents of that day! Father and Mother came down with me to Squire Richards' in the morning, and Mother remained while Father took our luggage to town. The day was bright, but cold. Snow banks lined the fences but the fields were bare. Roads were muddy, so John and I decided to walk to the railroad; Mother and Mrs. Richards bid us good-bye on the porch while the girls, Lucy, Olive and Helen walked with us across the lawn, and tearfully watched us as we walked up over Collins Hill and to the railroad.

Arrived at Binghamton we reported to Peter Wentz, and then our party got together and kept together during the trip. Everything was hurly-burly, rush and hustle till our train started, then we had time to rest and reflect. All of our party were disgusted with the company we were in, and I think some would have deserted at the first stopping place, if we had not decided that we would stand together and “tough it out” for three months, when we were promised free transportation home if we wished to go.

The trip to Washington was without special incident. Along the banks of the Delaware huge banks of ice were jammed in among the sycamore trees, and the river was in many places running between vertical banks of ice. At New York the weather was a little warmer, and in Washington next day the streets were dry. Clouds of dust were swirled around by the wind, and the weather was oppressively warm.

I remember that this difference in climate, the contrast between the snow banks and mud in Broome County, New York, and the midsummer conditions in Washington surprised me wonderfully.

All the country south of the Mason and Dixon line was like a foreign or unexplored land to most people of the Northern states. I knew absolutely nothing about it except what I had read in books, and the impressions I had received from reading about Virginia were so different from the reality that I began to question the accuracy of descriptions and even history. We stopped but an hour in Washington, or till Peter Wentz could get a pass for his party from the Provost Marshal to Alexandria, Virginia. Washington and all points south of it were under military rule, and nobody was allowed to cross the Potomac without this pass.

We arrived in Alexandria in due time and were taken to a forlorn looking barracks called the “bull pen”.

The night was cold and no fire in our quarters.

Richards and I bunked together and after we were asleep, covered warmly with our two blankets which our mothers had provided for us, some of our tramp companions who were not so well provided for, stole both blankets while we slept, and we never saw them again.

The cold awoke us, and we spent a cheerless night as indeed were all the nights and days during the two weeks we were quartered here.

Cold rains came on, and the discomforts we suffered sickened us of our job.

We had nothing to do except to stroll around in the mud, eat our hard-tack and bacon with good coffee served in tin cups. None of us had much money, and nearly all Richards and I had was required to purchase more blankets.

Finally Peter Wentz sent for me one day, and said, "Crocker, you appear to be about the only man who can keep a time-book, so I shall make you a foreman at \$2.00 per day. Pick out about fifteen men for your gang and report at Depot platform at 10 o'clock for work at Burkes Station." I lost no time in picking out our Finch Hollow crowd, and we were all as happy as clams at high tide.

During the next two months we were busy sawing wood for the engines and all of us enjoyed it. We were quartered in the station house and fixed ourselves up quite comfortably.

Suddenly this Orange and Alexandria railroad was abandoned. McClellan moved with his army to the Peninsula near Richmond, and my gang was ordered to White House Landing. Joe and Josh Finch declined to go there. They went home and never afterward came South.

Tom Hayes was appointed fuel agent for U.S. military railroads of Virginia, and I from that time reported to him. We went to White House Landing by boat, and I established camp near Savage Station and resumed the business of sawing wood for the engines used on the road between White House and the front.

Savage Station was four miles from Richmond and less than one mile from our out- posts. These were stirring times.

McClellan's army of 200,000 men were occupying a fortified front line perhaps twelve miles long, and were busy extending "parallels" still further to the front, making corduroy roads and bridges in the rear and fighting every day. Cannon and mortars were throwing shells every hour along some part of this line. The battle of Fair Oaks was fought within half a mile of my camp and a field hospital was established within a few rods of my tent. Wounded soldiers were brought on stretchers to this hospital, and arms and legs without number were amputated here during the day and thrown out in a pile near the surgeons' awning.

The next day after the Irish Brigade had driven the Confederates back within their fortifications, I visited the field and saw many trees, some the size of my body, which were literally torn to splinters by rifle bullets, and in our five-acre corn field I could walk from one end to the other, every step on a dead man. Terrible is war! We became accustomed to blood and carnage and were not visibly affected by the sight of dead or dying men.

During the war and after the seven days' fight we moved with the army to Harrison's Landing on the James, half a mile below Carter's landing and opposite City Point.

We finally stole our way onto a hospital boat and got back to Washington and Alexandria,

which was ever afterwards our headquarters. McClellan's dilatory policy on the peninsula lost him the confidence of the authorities at Washington. He was superseded by General Pope, who gathered a large army at Warrenton, Culpepper, and along the Rapidan. I was at once sent to Callett's Station, but after a few days Jackson came into Manassas Junction, burned several trains of cars loaded with supplies, destroyed Bull Run railroad bridge and others in the vicinity which compelled Pope to fall back. The second battle of Bull Run was fought and lost.

The second day of this fight I was privileged to overlook almost the whole field from the heights at Manassas, - the incessant roll of the artillery, the continuous firing of a quarter million rifles, the swaying back and forth of the lines of battle as either side would gain a temporary advantage, which lines could be traced for miles by the rising smoke of battle, the cloud of dust raised by the advancing troops of Longstreet as he hurried through Thoroughfare Gap fifteen miles away to the assistance of Jackson.

All these sights and sounds of that afternoon were so indelibly impressed upon my mind that memory will keep them fresh and accurate till my last day on earth. As soon as Longstreet's 20,000 fresh troops added their cheers and force to the tired troops of Jackson, Pope was doomed. He was routed at once and driven in great disorder towards Washington.

McClellan was recalled and a few weeks afterward fought the battle of Antietam.

After this battle the Army of the Potomac resumed its old quarters of the preceding spring at Warrenton and quiet reigned at the front for many months. I was again sent to Burkes Station and my duties were greatly increased. "Contrabands" as they came into our lines were provided work about the different camps, and by Christmas time 600 of them were with me. A train of 100 army wagons was also sent to me and I, a boy, had charge of the whole camp. Another large force of these contrabands was employed by a contractor, cutting wood of the Lee, Marshall and Robinson estates, covering hundreds of acres and extending on either side of the railroad between Burkes Station and Acotinek Creek bridge.

My business was to haul this wood to the railroad, load the greater part of it on cars - five or six train loads each day - for shipment to our yards in Alexandria and Washington; also to prepare wood for the engines at my station. These were busy times for me. Jack Richards was my assistant. Jack Sayer came down to take charge of my commissary department, and many other men from Finch Hollow and the River District were employed in responsible positions in my camp.

Silas B. Tyler, afterwards my father-in-law, had charge of the books and was paymaster for J.W. Potter, the wood contractor. In addition to my duties, managing and directing this whole camp, I organized a night school for such of those ignorant blacks as wished to learn to read and write, and took great pleasure in observing their quaint ways

and listening to their plantation songs and conversation.

They were well fed and housed in huts of their own construction and every pleasant evening hundreds of them would gather around a large fire to sing and dance and enjoy themselves in their own way.

A happier lot of mortals I never saw.

I established camp at the top of the grade one mile east of Burkes Station, had a comfortable board house built for headquarters which were occupied till late in October. This camp was named by Tom Hayes Treakel Point View. Hayes came up almost every day with the wood trains and always stayed to dinner. We were instructed to cut any timber in sight and hundreds of acres of magnificent oak woodland were cut over.

John B. Moseby, the chief of Guerrillas annoyed us a good deal. He was very bold, and although we had a regiment of soldiers to guard us, Moseby succeeded in getting away with many of our horses and mules, and several times nearly captured me when I was out loading our wagon train. We finally moved back to Burkes Station, establishing headquarters in the Station House.

A construction corps consisting of several gangs of carpenters (so-called), fifty men in each gang, was organized by General McClellan, military director of U. S. Railways, and as the pay was better, several of my men left to join it.

Tom Days took Richards from me and put him in charge of a similar camp, though much smaller, at Devereaux Station near Bull Run. Tyler became my commissary when we reorganized at Burkes Station. Christmas Eve we prepared at my camp a bountiful dinner, - roast pig, roast wild turkey, oysters, and all the good things we needed and could get, and all our Finch Hollow boys and acquaintances from Richards' gang and the Construction Corps were invited. About thirty of us enjoyed the best dinner I had while in the service. It was a red letter day and is still remembered by all yet living who were present. It was in a sense a reunion and everybody enjoyed it immensely. Fat Hageman, my table waiter, a young "short cake nigger", was in good form and did much to amuse and entertain my guests. He was a bright, quick-witted lad and his quaint manner of speech and intonation amused us all greatly. Fat's salary was \$10.00 per month. If he was paid in one dollar bills he was rich; if in one ten-dollar bill, he was not at all pleased. I used to saw a little on the fiddle. After Fat's second day he insisted that he must have a fiddle. I bought him one of the three dollar variety with which he frightened all the rats out of camp. He did not make as rapid progress in mastering the instrument as he wished, and wanted me to hire a professor to give him instruction. I said to him "Fat, why don't you hire me?" "Oh, Mars Crocker, you can't play for no money, you can only play a few little chunes."

The reunion and dinner were over and next day all our friends left for their respective fields

of labor. We never all got together again.

Sunday, the 28th, rumors were rife in camp that the rebels were at Dumfries and that we were in danger of capture. I did not believe there was any danger, so paid little attention to it.

The day was bright and all was quiet. At ten o'clock a train went through towards Washington, but it did not stop. Towards noon my colored men began to show signs of great uneasiness. They told me the "Rebs" would surely be there that night and they would not stay. Of course if they were caught they would be killed or severely punished and taken back to their old master.

I told them if they were afraid, to take a day's rations and go into hiding till morning. In an hour there was not a colored man in sight. My wagon master told me his men were getting very uneasy. At three o'clock he again reported that unless he moved to the protection of our troops he would not have a man to care for the stock. I assented to his moving for the night to Fairfax Court House, where he had a brigade of troops well entrenched.

The fastest work ever done by those teamsters was in breaking camp and lining out for Fairfax.

After these had left the quiet seemed oppressive. Richards, who was there to spend Sunday night with me, suggested that "discretion is the better part of valor" and maybe we should take our blankets and sleep in the pines that night.

We decided to get a bite to eat and accept Richards' suggestion.

We prepared coffee and were just sitting down to the table when the four windows in the room were quickly raised and eight confederate carbines were leveled at us, while the door was thrown open and a Confederate lieutenant commanded:

"Surrender, you Yankee devils!"

We surrendered.

This lieutenant with fifty troopers was the advance guard of General Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry brigade, and a part of the force of General J.E.B. Stuart, who was then making a daring raid inside our lines. He actually burned Acatinek Bridge within nine miles of Alexandria that night and had the audacity to use our own telegraph wires from Burkes Station for this message:

"General Van Vilet, Quartermaster General U.S.A., Washington, D.C.
Please arrange to keep your mules in better condition.

The last lot I captured were too poor for immediate use.

J.E.B. Stuart

Major General, C.S.A.”

At about eight o'clock that evening General Fitzhugh Lee rode in to Burkes with most of his cavalry brigade. They made short work appropriating my camp outfit, and for days afterwards my 600 tin cups were rattling at the sides of Confederate cavalry saddles.

The camp and everything about it except the station house was set on fire and in the light of this fire General Lee and staff rode up. The Lieutenant who had us in charge saluted and made a verbal report to the General. “Eight prisoners captured here.” General Lee replied, “See that none of them escape, and if anyone of them try, shoot him down.”

Within half an hour we were on the move and were kept marching all night, going through Vienna, Leesburg, and so through byways to the Aldee pike near Chantilly, having a sharp fight at Fairfax Courthouse, where the Confederates were repulsed. While this fight was in progress we were halted in the road. General J.E.B. Stuart rode up with his staff and dismounted near us. They proceeded at once to light fires and broil strips of salt fat pork over the embers, Stuart cooking his own meat the same as the least important private. General Stuart was a tall, distinguished looking man and every action and every tone of his voice indicated that he was a polished gentleman.

We halted for perhaps half an hour at Chantilly next morning but were not served anything to eat. In fact we had nothing to eat until we reached Dover in the mountains northwest of Warrenton at eleven o'clock Wednesday night, having traveled about ninety miles without sleep or food. Food was served us at infrequent intervals till we reached Culpepper Court House where we had a good square meal of partly decayed crackers. Here we were bundled into box cars and taken to Gordonsville. At Gordonsville we were taken into a dirty barracks for the night. No fire, no light, and nothing to eat. In this barracks I had my first close acquaintance with the army louse. The first one was followed at once by a whole brigade of them and I was not free of them for one instant until I threw away all my clothes at Alexandria the next spring.

This army louse is a ubiquitous animal found in all camps having insufficient bathing facilities. He is a little larger than a full-grown pissmire, though more chubby and fatter. His color is a dark gray and he is never quiet. In agility he equals the Irishman's flea. “When you put your finger on him he ain't there.”

In those days it was currently reported and generally believed that the patriarchs of this tribe carried the abbreviation “B.C.” indelibly imprinted on their backs. I had lain down on the ground to get a little sleep and in a few minutes felt something scampering up my leg. It was the army louse! He hurried along to my knee, bit a chunk out of my knee-pan, but

apparently he thought this too tough, so he retraced his steps and commenced chewing the calf of my leg. I disturbed him at this feast, when he turned his attention to a race up my back, followed by a legion of his fellows. An active skirmish for position seemed to be on in the vicinity of my right shoulder blade. Of course I got no sleep that night, but after a few weeks I got used to their antics and let them have all the fun with me they desired, for the reason that I could not help myself.

We finally landed in Richmond 200 strong, our party augmented to this number by detachments captured elsewhere.

We were thrown into Libby Prison, where we remained till the next March.

A description of our life there would fill a book, but I pass to a bright warm day in March, 1863, when we were paroled and told to get ready to move at once.

We were weak and emaciated from long confinement and want of nourishment, but this news cheered our hearts, and we filed out into the mud in Cary Street and marched with alacrity to the Petersburg depot, where we were loaded onto flat cars and shunted about the railroad yards till afternoon. After many delays and having our eyes and ears filled with cinders from the wood burning engine, we arrived at City Point at eleven P.M. and were checked off by lamp light on the wharf and went aboard the flag of truce boat New York. Here we were at once served white bread and a delicious cup (tin cup) of coffee with sugar and condensed milk.

At daylight next morning the New York, an old Hudson River passenger boat, pulled noiselessly out into the stream and moved down the James River with only a white flag at her masthead. The river was deserted. Not a vessel in sight till we beheld two of our picket gunboats at Newport News.

As we passed these, the white flag was taken down and Old Glory flung to the breeze.

Never before nor since have I participated in such enthusiastic cheering, nor experienced such a trust in the old flag as then. The red, white and blue waved proudly to the sunshine. We felt comforted, cheerful and safe. Patriotic songs were sung with spirit and feeling. Several paroled officers made patriotic speeches and we were all happy, and glad to be speeding to our loved ones and home.

Next morning we landed at Annapolis and without waiting for the formality of transportation, our Finch Hollow boys jumped a freight train speeding for Washington where we arrived about noon. My old railroad pass carried us to Alexandria.

I left the boys at a hotel on Duke Street and went immediately to our office at the upper end of the railroad yard. J.J. Moore, then Superintendent, was at his desk smoking his after-

dinner pipe. He looked at me in alarm as if I had been a ghost. Covered with dirty rags and weighing probably twenty pounds less than when he last saw me, it took him fully a minute to recognize me. When he realized the fact that this was indeed Crocker in the flesh, he arose with alacrity and gave me a hearty welcome. He immediately informed General McClellan in Washington by wire that

“Crocker and his man arrived from Richmond all safe and happy.” The General asked that I be sent to him at once. Moore went with me to a clothing store and a bathroom, where I cleaned up and with my new clothes on a complete new outfit from hat to shoes, I went over to General McClellan’s office and had a long talk with him and the Secretary of War, Stanton, as to what I had observed of the conditions in the Confederacy. McClellan asked me when I drew my last pay, and what wages I was getting. He then ordered Paymaster Robinson to pay me in full to April, naming a substantial per diem advance, and to grant me a thirty day furlough, and till I could get my men exchanged. Robinson paid me near \$600 in crisp new greenbacks, and next day my Finch Hollow boys were also paid to April and we went home. This was the most money I had ever seen at one time, and I anticipated much pleasure in placing it. I went immediately to Mother in Finch Hollow and now recall with infinite satisfaction her happiness in seeing me again. I gave her \$100 for new dresses for herself and my sisters. The next four weeks were the happiest of my life. Everybody did his best to entertain and feed me - I would eat twelve times a day and enjoy every meal. I was a hero and glad of it. My best girl was teaching school in Chenango County, thirty miles away. I went up there to call on her and she was glad to see me. She adjourned her school and procured a substitute for two weeks and came back home with me. A continuous round of parties and visits! Even the memory of my happiness then is cheering. All things mundane must have an ending. I got word from Washington that my exchange had been effected and to come on at once. I went back and continued in the service till 1866.

I am standing on the height of ground where nearly one hundred years ago my grandfather built an old colonial mansion and in it raised a family of twelve children, five of whom are still living.

For sixty odd years I have known this place and neighborhood intimately and as I allow my memory to carry me back to my infancy and early boyhood I can hardly realize the changes which time has wrought.

I can see myself now as a toddling barefoot boy, leaving my mother who has kissed me and is watching me as I scamper over the well kept lawn to the broad flag walk leading up to the great house. Grandfather has seen me coming and hastens to open the great oaken doors, over which a half circle window with frame and partition like a fan admits a dim light to the large hall. A smile spreads over Grandfather’s rugged countenance as he takes me by the

hand and partly lifts me up the stone steps and through the open door.

We pause in the hall a moment, which gives me an opportunity to see the large spread antlers projecting from the west wall, and the carved newel post and cherry rail along the broad stairs leading to the upper floors.

Grandfather's room is to the right, which we enter by a side door. How well I can remember the appearance of this room. Four large windows from the east and south admit a flood of light. In the partition wall to the north is a great fireplace in which a cheery fire is always burning, except in the warmest weather. Over this fireplace is a solid carved oak mantel on which is always a vase of flowers and on either end a tall, heavy brass candlestick. A pair of brass snuffers on an ornamental brass tray is also on this shelf. To the right of the fireplace is the door leading to the large dining room and to the right of this a heavy walnut book case with glass doors. To the left is a small cherry stand on which rests Grandfather's Bible. He is a great reader, and this is his favorite book. Many interesting stories are related of him and the circuit riders of those early days. It was Grandfather's delight to entertain these itinerant preachers.

Against the west wall of this room is a high post bedstead, covered with homemade linens and homemade woolen blankets of many colors.

For two or three years as I developed in mind and body I went almost every day to call on Grandfather, and now I recall with infinite satisfaction his unfailing patience with me and his readiness at all times to discommode himself to interest, amuse or instruct me.

His days of active work had passed when I first knew him, but the impress of a good, conscientious man was left for his family and his generation. As I grew older and began to notice things about me, what I saw made an impression on my memory which only the grave will obliterate.

My grandfather passed to his reward nearly sixty years ago and the old house succumbed to the fire fiend shortly afterwards, but I shall always cherish a memory of him and it with affection.

Directly opposite the old house was a hickory grove of fifty or more magnificent trees on about half an acre of ground. Only two or three of those remain, the others having been removed for some economic reason. A broad, well used path led through this grove, directly to the river, passing just east of the two large barns, and a side path led to the gravelly bank at the foot of which my uncles for years maintained a springboard which was used by themselves and the young men for miles around. At this point a long, deep space had been scooped out by some forgotten freshet, making a roomy and delightful swimming place. This north arm of the river had formed an island of some twenty acres which within the memory of man had always been cleared land, as were, indeed, several hundred acres of

the adjacent mainland. This was the site of an old Indian village and much of the land had been planted to corn by the Indians. At the time of which I write this island produced a large crop of excellent hay every year and after this was taken off, afforded pasture for a herd of young cattle and horses. More than a hundred butternut trees were there also, which produced many wagon loads of nuts. These were hauled away by anybody who wished for them, and while the young men from Finch Hollow, East Maine, Oak Hill and the Ashery were laying nuts by for the long winter evenings, a numerous colony of chattering squirrels were also busy.

To the left was the training field where the militia of this part of the state gathered yearly to receive instruction in the manual of arms and to practice mimic war.

Bordering this training field at the junction of the Choconut Creek and the river was the Indian burying ground, in which had grown a forest of maple, cherry and elm trees and festooned from these were numerous wild grape vines, a romantic and somber place, which the creek and river were gradually but surely washing away. It is entirely gone now. This gravelly bank and training field was the meeting place for this and other nearby neighborhoods. Saturday afternoons in the summer and fall when weather was pleasant always found somebody present. Swimming, ball play, quoits and wrestling - always something doing.

The old house stood on the height of ground which sloped gently away in all directions. To the north and northwest a fine orchard extended to the meadow beyond. Two very large sugar maples and one large wild cherry tree stood near the brink of a pond. These are all gone now, not even a decayed root remains.

Four- and six-horse stage coaches whirled along this old Great Western Turnpike, loaded down with human freight.

The changes which time brings to every locality are here only apparent when we compare this distant past with the present. The changes from month to month or even from year to year are hardly appreciable. But I go today to the top of this gravelly bank and what do I see? The same vines clamber over its precipitous side. The wild sumac lifts its scarlet head in the autumn sunshine as of yore. The low hazelnut nestles where the Indian Summer will ripen its fruit. All these groundlings have not changed, but the row of majestic wild cherry trees standing as sentinels guarding the approach to these beauties of nature are gone. The cluster of slippery elms around the silvery spring and rivulet, nearer the river, have left not a trace of their existence. The beds of clamshells left by the Indians have long since melted into the soil.

The arrowheads and other Indian utensils which were then so common as to be regarded of no value can no longer be found. The island is an island no longer. A noisy railroad has invaded it, cutting it in half with a high embankment which has also forever blocked the

north arm of the river, leaving this famous swimming place simply a cove, filled with murky water which the fish have left. The squirrels no longer scamper from one butternut tree to another because the trees are all gone. The training field has degenerated into a plebian market garden. The aristocratic stage coach which whirled past with so much flourish and toot of horn has been supplanted by a swift gliding trolley car. The broad meadows, where grew the wild strawberry, and where the bobolink and meadow lark so vociferously welcomed the morning sun, are meadows no longer. More than two dozen substantial houses with lots large or small adjoining occupy this broad expanse; even the everlasting hills have changed. Their contour is the same, but the dark somber green of the forests which clothed them is gone. Now they are bare and yellow.

It is perhaps unprofitable to speculate on the probable changes which the next sixty years will bring. We are apt to believe that all possible progress and development in the application of natural forces have been made, but if history repeats itself we have but just entered the realm of change, of development. The future for those who will live here during the next sixty years is quite as much a sealed book as the mysteries of that world to which all are fast journeying.
