

OLD KITCHEN REVERIES.

Far back in my musings, my thoughts have been cast
To the cot where the hours of my childhood were passed;
I loved all its rooms to the pantry and hall,
But that blessed old kitchen was dearer than all.
Its chairs and its table, none brighter could be,
For all its surroundings were sacred to me—
To the nail in the ceiling, the latch on the door,
And I love every crack on the old kitchen floor.

I remember the fireplace with mouth high and wide,
The old-fashioned oven that stood by its side,
Out of which, each Thanksgiving, came puddings and pies,
That fairly bewildered and dazzled my eyes,
And then, too, St. Nicholas, stily and still,
Came down every Christmas our stockings to fill;
But the dearest of memories I've laid up in store,
Is the mother that trod on the old kitchen floor.

Day in and day out, from morning till night,
Her footsteps were busy, her heart always light,
For it seemed to me, then, that she knew not a care,
The smile was so gentle her face used to wear;
I remember with pleasure what joy filled our eyes,
When she told us the stories that children so prize;
They were new every night, though we'd heard them before
From her lips, at the wheel, on the old kitchen floor;

I remember the window, where mornings I'd run
As soon as the daybreak to watch for the sun;
And I thought, when my head scarcely reached to the sill,
That it slept through the night in the trees on the hill,
And the small tract of ground that my eyes there could view
Was all of the world that my infancy knew;
Indeed, I cared not to know of it more,
For a world of itself was that old kitchen floor.

To-night those old visions come back at their will,
But the wheel and its music forever are still;
The hand is moth-eaten, the wheel laid away,
And the fingers that turned it lie mould'ring in clay;
The heartstone, so sacred, is just as 'twas then,
And the voices of children ring out there again;
The sun through the window looks in as of yore,
But it sees strange feet on the old kitchen floor;

I ask not for honor, but this I would crave,
That when the lips speaking are closed in the grave,
My children would gather their round by their side,
And tell of the mother who long ago died;
'T would be more enduring, far dearer to me,
Than inscription on granite or marble could be,
To have them tell often, as I did of yore,
Of the mother who trod on the old kitchen floor.

A PERILOUS VOYAGE.

Those familiar with the lumber regions, not only of the United States, but of Canada, know that the great streams which float the huge rafts of timber down to the various ports and mills along their course, are often made servicable for other purposes. Sometimes the lumberman or shingle-maker takes his family with him to the scene of his winter's labors; and in the spring, when the season's work is ended, places them—women and children, sometimes a round dozen—on a raft of logs or shingles, and keeping close to the shore, floats down 10, 20, or 30 miles to his home. The hunter, who has for weeks hunted and trapped in the vast forests along these streams, binds his packages of furs together, makes himself a conveyance by lashing half a dozen logs firmly to each other, and accomplishes his journey of 100 or more miles in 24 hours.

As a general thing, there is little risk in such a journey. If the weather is fair and the river clear of floating lumber, there is hardly more danger than there would be in making the distance behind a pair of fast horses in a country wagon. People, however, if they live in constant contact with danger, grow careless in time, and often risk their own lives and those of others where there is no necessity.

And so it happened in the instance I am about to relate.

John Allen was a well-to-do farmer of Woodstock, on the St. John river, and beside the income derived from his land and dairy, he owned, in connection with his son, a tract of wild timber some dozen miles up the river. Beginning to turn its advantages to account in a small way, the two had erected a small shingle mill near the shore, and kept half a dozen men at work during the winter. The result the first year was so satisfactory that it was resolved to increase the facilities of the manufacture, and that it might be done understandingly, they determined to visit the mill for personal examination.

They were to have one of the farm hands

drive them up as far as they could get with a team, and from that point it was hardly more than a mile to the mill. More than half the way the road was merely a rough cart track through the woods, making the journey rather a tedious one; but by starting very early in the morning they calculated to make all the necessary investigations, and get back early in the afternoon.

This was the plan agreed upon, and the time set was the following Saturday. As soon as it became known in the house, the two youngest boys, Harry and Jack, were wild with excitement.

"Mayn't we go, too?" they shouted in concert. "Please let us go. We never saw a shingle mill."

"A shingle mill isn't much to see," answered their father. "And, beside, you'll be getting into all sorts of danger."

"Oh, no we won't. We'll be so careful, if you'll let us go. It would be such a nice ride!"

"Why don't you let them go, father?" said Mrs. Allen. "They won't take up so much room, and they will enjoy it so much."

"Well, well," said the farmer good-naturedly, "let 'em go. I shall have to take the double wagon if they go, though; and that's large enough for the whole family."

"Why not take the whole family, then?" said Mrs. Allen, half in earnest. "I've hardly been out of doors the whole winter and spring, and I should enjoy the ride as well as the boys."

Farmer Allen laughed. "Any more of you want to go? What would you do with the baby?"

"Take her, of course. You don't suppose weather like this would hurt her? She needs air as much as anybody."

"Are you really in earnest, mother?"

"Certainly. I don't see why you can't make a pleasure jaunt out of it as well as a business one. I haven't been so far away from home for five years, and I guess the house could get along without me for half a day. Becky can get dinner for the men at noon, and we should get home by two or three o'clock at the latest.

So the matter was settled.

At seven o'clock the next Saturday morning the party set out, all in the highest spirits. A huge basket of lunch was placed under the seat, much to the satisfaction of Harry and Jack, who had been too much excited over the journey to care much for breakfast.

It was after 11 o'clock when they reached the mill. The wagon had been left at the end of the road, a mile back, the horses taken out, and a bag of oats emptied upon the ground for them. They were both steady-going old veterans, used to the harrow and plow, and would stand just where they were left for hours at a time. The farmer, however, had taken the precaution, after putting the bridles in the wagon, to tie the halter to one of the wheels.

The mill stood close down to the water's edge, and in front and all around it were heaps of blocks, refuse timber, logs, and shavings. It was not a very romantic-looking place, but the children were delighted with it.

The long ride had given them all a good appetite. A rough table was made out of some boards laid across a couple of stumps, and the contents of the big basket were soon placed upon it. Lunch finished, the farmer and his son began their investigations, while Mrs. Allen and the children wandered about looking for arbutus and gathering pine cones. There was more to be looked after about the mill than was expected, and it was about 2 o'clock before the job was finished.

So busy had they all been that the gradual clouding up of the sky had not been noticed, and it was not until the sudden pattering of rain upon the trees that the little party began to look about them.

"It's nothing but an April shower," said Tom. "We shall have to get under the mill till it passes over."

"Don't you believe it," returned the farmer. "We have had rain hanging around for a week past, and we've got it now, sure enough. Do

the best we can, we shall be drenched. You run on ahead, Tom, and put the horses in, so as to be ready by the time we get there. We'll be right after you."

Obedient to his father's advice, Tom hurried rapidly along the path leading to the spot where the team had been left, while the remainder of the party followed after as fast as they could. The place was reached at last. The wagon was there, the two bridles lay just where they were thrown, but the horses were gone.

For a moment the farmer stood dumb-founded, then he began to examine their tracks.

"It's plain enough," at last he hurriedly said. "They've slipped the halter and have started back home. You'll have to see if you can overtake them, Tom. I'll take your mother and children back to the mill. The wind is rising, and it is setting in for a cold, raw storm."

The rain came faster and faster, and by the time they had regained the shelter of the mill they were thoroughly wet through. A fire was soon kindled in the little cracked stove used by the shingle makers the winter before, the time spent in waiting for Tom's return was employed in drying their garments.

An hour passed away. The storm grew more and more furious. The rain poured down in torrents, and the great tops of the pine trees bent and writhed in the terrible gusts, which became more and more frequent. The river, always rapid and strong, was now a fierce, turbulent stream, whose middle current nothing could cross in safety.

At last Tom burst into the mill.

"It's of no use," he exclaimed. "We've got to stay here or swim home. I went clear to the main road, more than five miles from here, and found that the horses have turned the wrong way, instead of going home. If they had gone straight back, the men would have known that something had happened, and came for us; but there is no chance for that now."

At this Harry and Jack began to cry; and even Mrs. Allen looked dismayed.

"Staying here to-night is out of the question," said Mr. Allen. "We must get home somehow. We haven't a morsel to eat, and every hour we stay makes it worse. We're in for a long storm, and the roads half the way from here to the turnpike will be under water within twelve hours."

"What shall we do then?" asked Tom, who was holding his dripping coat before the blaze. Mr. Allen shook his head.

"If it was fair weather, I should know what to do quick enough; and I don't know but we shall be obliged to come to it anyway."

"Why, what do you mean, father?" asked Mrs. Allen, anxiously.

He pointed to the river. "I should take the shingle raft lying there by the landing. It is staunch and strong, and just as safe as any boat that ever floated on the St. John river."

Mrs. Allen had all a woman's dread of water, and her heart sank at once. But the idea of being compelled to remain for two or three days in that desolate spot, without food or a chance to sleep, was more dreadful yet, and she felt almost like urging her husband to carry out the desperate idea he had announced.

"We've got to decide upon something pretty quick," continued the farmer. "It'll be dark in an hour, and we shall have no choice."

He went to the window and looked out for a moment at the river. Then he came back to the stove again.

"It storms fearfully," said he; "but then we're pretty nigh as wet as we can be now. I believe we can keep in shore without much trouble, and at the rate the stream is running now we should reach Woodstock in less than an hour. I've done it in worse weather than this."

"I shouldn't be afraid myself," said Tom; "but then there's mother and the children—they must be thought of."

"I'm not afraid, Tom," said Mrs. Allen. "And even if I were, I believe it is the only thing we can do."

"We'll try it then," said Mr. Allen, decidedly.