

:: Barefoot Days ::

**W**E may be far from the land of our birth, but the same sun and moon and stars rise and set. The day breaks with the same clouds and light, and closes with the same glory in the evening sky. These, with the trees, and the grass and the earth are the connecting links to the other country which we can never visit,—childhood.

On any drowsy summer afternoon when we loll half awake on the green turf, smelling some familiar flower, or listening to the lazy drone of bees as they search through the blossoms or sag by overhead, should some wild, sweet-noted song bird, close by, break suddenly into a familiar carol, we for the time forget our place and being,—forget the time elapsed since we last heard the song. Transported heart, mind and soul into the used-to-be, we live again the incidents and pranks never once thought of since.

There was the dusty road with the little sand hill we climbed just before coming to the bridge over the creek; and beyond, the river and the mill pond; the dam and the rocks below; and the drooping elms and basswood where the king fisher made his point of observation, or flew chattering to some snag further down the stream. There, also, was the mill with its hum and grind, and the cozy, queer looking house under the pines where the miller lived. I cannot leave out the flaxen-haired, blue-eyed daughter, who, in that barefoot stage caused me a year of blissful misery. She went away, and to this day I often wonder where she is, and how she fares.

The green pastures below were covered with cowslips along the stream, and higher up, with dandelions and trilliums, with occasional clumps of wild thorn apple and hazel bush, where the chipmunks ran chirping in defiance over the fallen logs. Then the road led back along the stream and across it, and by a school house. How often we grimy-fisted urchins had played truant there, and been trounced and kept in several recesses at a stretch. No trouncing though could keep us from wading in the frog pounds or chasing squirrels and wood-chucks till we forgot there was such a thing as an end to the recess or noon hour.