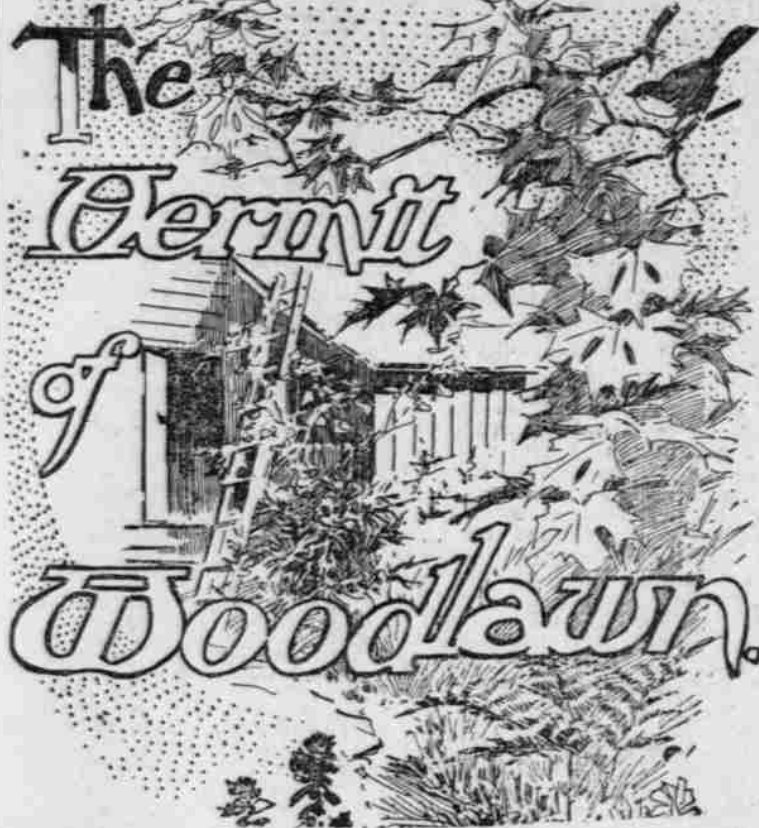




The shadowy desert, unfrequented woods,
I better brook than flourishing peopled towns;
There can I sit alone, unseen of any,
And to the nightingale's complaining notes
Tune my despondencies, and record my woes.

—Shakespeare.

Removed from the haunts of men, living solitary and alone, is the subject of this sketch—Edwin Kemera, the Hermit of Woodlawn. Obscured by trees, overgrown by vines and surrounded by a dense thicket of verdure, is the story-and-a-half cottage this singular man calls home. Leaving the electric car, either at Piedmont or Woodlawn, and plunging into the wild woods for the matter of a mile or so, one may find this quiet, gentle man.

To him who in the love of nature holds communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language; for his gayer hours she has a voice of gladness, and a smile and eloquence of beauty; and she glides into his darker musing with a mild and gentle sympathy that steals away to him a deep solitude, and leaves him while she is near, to stand like a lone star in the firmament.

It was thus Edwin Kemera found it. Wearied of the bustle of life, weary of the town's emptiness, and weary of the hollow and hypocritical of men; longing for that sweet solitude where Nature "speaks a various language," Kemera sought the woods, for there is rest and peace. Fatigued with the grinding exactions of toll, he sought this peaceful cot, where he might be alone, where there is succor from fret and worry and care.

A Discovery.

It was a warm June day, when the writer, trudging along dusty pathways, discovered an opening through the tangled underbrush to what appeared to be a vacant house. Neglected vines, unpruned for many a year, ran rampant over the outer walls. The blinds were tightly closed. The panes of glass of what had once been a window in a door were missing—a lack partly supplied by weather-beaten boards nailed on within. Against the door there leaned a small fir tree, with brown and deadened leaves.

To stuff a crack,
To keep the wind away.

The gate was closed and tightly wired. There is always a peculiar shade of sadness and desolation about a place like this, left deserted and alone. No one, to judge by outward appearance, would for a moment have imagined that the place was then a human habitation. Off to the right were the sweeping vistas of gently undulating woodland, bound, in the distance, by the broad Willamette, that glistened in the morning sun, like molten silver. Beyond were those faithful sentinels—St. Helens and Mount Hood. In clear relief they stood, outlined against the blue. Their diadems of trackless and eternal snows shone pure and resplendent.

Stretching far away were the lower peaks of the mountain range, lost in the distant haze. Now and then some happy bird carried its song of gladness, while the "drowsy tinklings" of cow bells fell upon the ear, like some sweet minor chord, in the pastoral melody. The green leaves rustled with the passing breeze, and the insects hummed, while marguerites in myriads turned their white faces toward the kindly azure sky.

Drawing nearer, a way of gray-hued planks that led round the house was discovered. At the rear was a cluster, covered with boards, and these were wet. At hand was a bucket, to which was attached a piece of rope. Close by was a small jar of brown earthenware. The back door stood ajar. Upon this the scribe softly rapped. The sound of shuffling feet came from within, and then the occupant appeared. It was the hermit of Woodlawn.

The Hermit.

The man was no ascetic, with tangled hair and beard, and sour visage. Ah, no. A pleasant, genial face, kissed by sunshine and winds to rich tan. A pair of large, brown, kindly eyes to match the beard, grown longer on the chin than on the cheek, through which the red blood glowed with healthful tinge. The heavy mustache drooped gracefully from the full red lips. Behind these gleamed the firm white teeth, as he smiled a welcome. Truly, he was a fine-appearing man. In

his very look there was cordiality. Encouraged by his friendly air, the man of the pencil craved of this young hermit—he said he was but 40—a drink of cold water, and the privilege of rest in his cool retreat.

"Certainly," and he brought out a brimming cup. It is doubtful whether the cooling beverage was ever more comforting. "I would ask you in," he said, half-apologetically, "but the place is all topsy-turvy. Wait a moment; I'll bring you out a chair."

He disappeared. Somewhere from that mysterious interior he brought it forth. It was a lawn chair, one of those affairs with a light but firm framework of wood, over which was fastened a piece of strong canvas. It was an ideal arrangement in which to sit, to lean back, to dream dreams; to take one's after-dinner siesta on a summer afternoon.

Of Gentle Breeding.

Mr. Kemera sat down upon the steps. He accepted the proffered cigar, with a polite acknowledgment. He was evidently a man of good breeding. If there was any of the formality left between us, it was fast being broken.

My host struck a match. As he did so the outlines of his hands were shown. They were clearly not those of the toiler, but bespoke a man of fine instincts and tastes. In conversing with him it was noticeable that he used the simplest and plainest language possible. He avoided coarse expressions.

"I like to smoke," he remarked, inconspicuously. For a moment or two he puffed away at his cigar in silence. "Away off

here in the woods," he continued, "I very seldom get a cigar, but I have my pipes—three of them. One has a cherry-wood bowl; another is a briar, and then I have my meerschaum, too. With these, and a little good tobacco—not too strong—I get along very well. Do you know that a pipe is a great deal of company? I get much comfort out of my pipes. Tobacco is a pretty good friend to have around when a man's lonesome."

Picturesque Figure.

Kemera seemed thoroughly to enjoy that cigar, and he smoked it with the air of a connoisseur. As he sat there in the doorway, he presented a picturesque and interesting figure. His well-shaped head was surmounted by a queer little felt hat. It had long since been divorced from its band; was low-crowned; had a turned-up brim, and was sadly battered by the elements.

He wore a dark, navy-blue sweater, with the regulation "turtle-neck," turned up closely about his throat, albeit the day was warm. A pair of dark trousers that had seen better days, and old shoes, completed his attire.

"Don't you sometimes get lonely out here in the woods?" asked the visitor.

"No; not generally. I like it; it's so nice and quiet here."

"How do you spend your time? Do you ever go hunting or fishing?"

"Oh, I don't know; the time seems to pass some way. To hunt? It's too far to go where there's game. I don't care very much for fishing, although I did go once since I came here to live. I read and sleep; eat and enjoy my pipe—and rest"—and he sighed contentedly.

"I have sometimes thought I'd like such a life," volunteered the newspaper man, for the sake of saying something. "What do you read—books?"

Reads the Papers.

"No; I get the San Francisco and the big New York Sunday papers, occasionally I read The Oregonian."

Then he fell to talking about the recent election. He showed perfect familiarity with the subject. He explained the numerous tickets that were in the field, and evinced an intelligent understanding of the issues involved. Although no longer an integral portion of the great outside world, he has by no means lost his interest in it. He seemed glad to have a visitor, and he chatted freely on various topics.

"Oh, I can sleep out here—sleep 10 hours a day, if I want to—and I do. I go to bed usually about 9:15, and I arise when I please."

"What do you eat? Do you do your own cooking? Have you a vegetable garden?"

The young hermit did not resent this triple bombardment of interrogations. As he talked on, in his low, pleasantly modulated tones, one forgot all about his attire. Knocking the ashes from his cigar, he answered:

"I walk over to Woodlawn once a day to get the things I want. I need very little.



young, the human race has vigorously supported this principle. Nations have struggled for it; individuals have willingly died that liberty might live. When asked if he very often had visitors, Kemera replied:

"Very seldom. Sometimes a boy or two comes along. Occasionally a man does so, as you have done."

"Your mode of life," I remarked, "is so unusual and out of the ordinary that it really interests me. Would you mind telling me how it was you came to retire to this spot?"

Impertinent, as such a query would have seemed to many, Kemera did not consider it, for he said, very frankly:

"Not at all. You see, I became tired of working—tired of society; I did not feel well. There's so much of emptiness in it all. Then there's the noise—the noise of the city. I never liked that. I couldn't rest well or sleep. I thought the matter all over for a long time before I decided. I kept looking around to find a place that was quiet, and that would suit me. Finally, I hit upon this. It costs me no rent; I get the place for taking care of it."

Since the Holidays.

"How long have you lived here?"

"Since the holidays."

"Will you make this your permanent home?"

"That depends. I can't say as to that. If I should get tired of this sort of life, I may go away somewhere else—down into California, perhaps."

"Are you a native Oregonian? Have you any relatives around here?"

"No; I came from back East. My relatives live there."

Then the conversation turned to the work-day world. Mr. Kemera vaguely referred to having been an accountant in Portland, shrugging his shoulders, as though the experience had been disagreeable. He added, with an evident sigh of relief, as though glad to have escaped the treadmill of balance sheets and ledgers:

"But I gave it all up to come out here, to be myself—to rest and sleep."

Suddenly springing to his feet, evidently having forgotten all about his home being all "topsy-turvy," he invited his visitor to enter the house. There were three or four rooms in the dwelling. All the floors were bare, save here and there an old rug.

Living Quarters.

In the room off his bedroom was an apartment that did duty as dining-room, kitchen, parlor and sitting-room. Mr. Kemera admitted that the old house, which had been tenanted for four or five years, was rather cold in winter. In the brick fireplace were a heap of ashes and a few partially burned pieces of wood. In one corner was a guitar, in a neat, brown case. Several fine etchings, tastefully framed, adorned the walls. There, too, were several Japanese landscapes—peculiar productions, in which the perspective is always wanting. In the

permeated retirement.

Just prior to Kemera's self-imposed ostracism, an acquaintance says he overheard him conversing in a Pine-street restaurant with two friends. To them he dwelt on the pleasures and advantages of the very mode of life he has now adopted. About January 1 of the present year he voluntarily surrendered his clerkship in the bank, and retired from the accustomed haunts of men.

His late associates esteem his act as a peculiar whim—an inexplicable idiosyncrasy. Kemera himself sees nothing peculiar in it. He says he needed rest, and one must believe that, in communion with nature, he has found it. The close far niente; the companionship of the trees, the flowers and birds, amid the eternal calm; the sweet, pure air—they have been the factors that have worked out the change Kemera longed for. He says his health has greatly improved. He has merely dared to do the very thing of which many another man has dreamed and wished for in his soul.

Perhaps Kemera may be right, after

passioned tongue, "Deus vult"—God wills! Shakespeare speaks of the "old Hermit of Prague," while Coleridge refers to a hermitage.

There lived in the latter part of the 17th century, in England, an odd character in seclusion—Roger Crab. Three forthings a week sufficed for his few wants, and his diet consisted of bran, herbs, roots, dock leaves and mallows.

Enjoyed Pipe and Beer.

William Loe was another eccentric Englishman. He was called "the old Hermit of Burgoland." He was still living in 1851, in Swepstone parish, in Leicestershire. True hermits are "dead to the world." Loe was anything but this, for he lived in a comfortable cottage, and there enjoyed his pipe and pot of beer. His favorite sentiment was this: "True hermits, throughout every age, have been the firm abettors of freedom." Loe's fad was the collection of a large and fantastic wardrobe. He had no less than 30 different styles of hats. Each of these was labeled with a quaint motto.

Napoleon, while among men, was not of them. In one sense he was a hermit. It was to Charles Phillips (1783-1859), that the world owes this oft-quoted description of the "Little Corporal":

"Grand, gloomy and peculiar, he sat upon the throne, a sequestered hermit, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality."

At Derwent Water, near Keswick, England, are still visible the ruins of the hermitage of St. Herbert, who lived in the 11th century.

The quiet home, near Nashville, Tenn., to which Andrew Jackson, the seventh President of the United States, retired from the cares of public life, is known by all as "The Hermitage."

So far as recorded events show, this country has had but very few hermits. Occasionally, however, one is heard from. In 1873, David Brown, the hermit of Newfane, Vt., died. His marked eccentricity was a mania for collecting books. These were the sole companions of his lonely life.

The Duke of Savoy, of whom Addison wrote, retired to a solitary spot, and, "after a very glorious reign, took on him the habit of a hermit."

Origin of Term Hermit.

The word hermit comes from the Greek, eremites; Latin, eremitia. It was originally applied to the solitary ascetics of the early Christian church. These anchorites retired to out-of-the-way places to live alone and to escape the cares and temptations of life. In the time of Constantine (306-337) many of these ascetics withdrew to desert solitudes. Paul, Anthony and Paphnutius were the most celebrated. Simon, the founder of the Stylites, is said to have perched for 30 years upon a pillar.

In India, too, there are recluses, of whom Buddha was the greatest and first. It was not until a later time that the term hermit was applied to eccentric individuals who abandon their fellows, either from an inordinate fondness for being

alone, or a sense of morbid aversion for human society.

Those who find happiness only in the association with their fellow-men, and who love to touch elbows with the bustling world will not envy Edwin Kemera, the hermit of Woodlawn. To many such an existence would savor too much of a penitentiary sentence—a sort of death in life. Yet there will come a time some day to one and all, when life's cares and joys will be thrust aside, when all must find repose in the grave, "the windowless palace of rest." But most people do not care to anticipate this, and a hermit's life will never be a popular one.

What we are now.

The great, the wise, the fair, the brave, Shall all hereafter be.

All hermits—in the grave.

CHARLES E. SAWYER.

BLASTED LOVE.

I thought her divine as an angel above,

As sweet as a fresh-opened rose,

From the crown of her head, like a Queen's, held crest.

To the tips of her next little toes.

As we walked through the meadows of "love's young dream,"

Her Oxford became untied,

And I knelt down to fasten the strings for her,

And longingly wished her my bride.

But my wish took a turn 'round the block all at once,

And my love can stand lots of shocking—

The fuse that blasted it out sky-high was: She'd pinned up the hole in her stocking!

—P. L.

low window, piled upon the floor, was a lot of illustrated newspapers.

Here, then, were all the evidences of this man's finer instincts—love of music, of art, of reading. Upon the papers was a handful of orange peelings. As they were dry, they must have been there for some time. Across the room, his coal-stove rested against the wall, upon which stood a number of kitchen utensils.

Mr. Kemera's bed is a rustic contrivance, made of the banded boughs of dogwood. He has several chairs and a center-table of the same material. Perhaps the oddest thing in the room was the improvised chandelier. Four branches of dogwood, no heavier than one's little finger, attached to the four corners of a pine board, about a foot square, comprised the queer bit of furniture. The branches were fastened to the top, and the whole was suspended from a lamphook in the ceiling.

On the shelf rested a cutglass ink bottle, into which was thrust a short piece of tallow candle.

In another room Mr. Kemera kept his provisions. Hanging from a hook in the plastering overhead was a piece of clothesline, the two ends of which were fastened to rings on the sides of the detached tin oven of his oil stove. He opened the door, and there, dangling in mid-air, he kept part of his supplies.

"You see," he explained, "this plan keeps the rats out. In this wooden box here, pointing to one on the floor, I have some coffee, eggs and salt."

On the rustic center table lay one of

All I get does not amount to more than \$3 a week. My house rent is free. I've spent considerable in fixing up this place. I get a little bread and some milk; sometimes a little meat, besides vegetables and fruit. I like oranges very much. What little cooking I have to do is on a coal oil stove. I manage to get along very well. I don't bother about a garden."

"I suppose you do your own washing, too?"

"Yes," and an amused smile crossed his features; "that is, mostly. Some things, of course, I send to the laundry."

Wondering if he had any pets about him, the visitor next inquired:

"Have you a dog or a cat or anything of that sort? I should think such would prove companionable."

"No; sometimes I've thought I would get a good dog, but I'm afraid he wouldn't stay here long; it might be too quiet for him."

Then the conversation turned upon dogs in general, and what some of the great writers have said about the faithful, four-footed companion. Of course, in such a matter, all the change Sir Walter Scott so finely said about dogs were not forgotten.

True Humanity.

"The trouble would be, I fear," said Kemera, thoughtfully, "if I should get a dog I might have to tie him up to keep him home. That would be wrong; it is always wrong to deprive any living thing of its liberty."

How true these words! Since time was

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