

patiently drawing a rail up and balancing it before him and then as perseveringly ending it off to the place desired. I remember Mrs. Dunham as a woman of large frame, benignant face, and, at the neighborhood prayer meeting, always helpful to it in her quiet way. It does not surprise me to learn that two daughters went out from this plain farmhouse as wives of Congregational ministers. Louisa married Rev. Lucien Farnham, Olivia, Rev. Romulus Barnes. Tracing the stream from that hillside fountain a little further, I am delighted, when told that Mrs. Farnham's daughter became the wife of Owen Lovejoy, a most valiant champion for freedom, whose blood was shed because he pleaded the cause of the slaves so effectively. I spoke of Mrs. Dunham as a helper in that neighborhood prayer meeting, kept up, on Tuesday evenings, for a generation or more. Ascending the hill from her house we come to the place of those meetings, and of the district school. It stood upon the top of a great hill, with wide views, and steep descent to the east down which our boys' sleds glided in the winter as did our skates upon the smooth ice of the pond in the rear. But the gathering of so goodly a company of neighbors every week for worship was a power to cement and uplift the whole neighborhood, as truly as did the day school in another way.

Going west from this point half a mile, to the next hilltop, we come to where Malachi Maynard established himself in 1768, one year after the town was incorporated. He is described, in the address of Charles Rice at our Centennial, as strong bodily and mentally, a sturdy Puritan, who came from Westboro, in Worcester County, Mass. He enjoyed only six weeks of schooling in boyhood, but was made treasurer of the town for twenty-six years, and was sent to the Legislature three years in succession—a noble, reliable, and useful man. One son became a lawyer, in Central New York, vigorous, like his father. A daughter married Zelotes Bates, and lived long upon the old place. With them were two maiden sisters, Lucy and Anne Maynard. They were generous givers to Mount Holyoke Seminary at its very beginning. A dreadful calamity came upon this whole household. I remember it well, though a mere child. We were returning from church on Thanksgiving day, when,

CHAPTER X.

USEFUL MEN AND WOMEN.

REMINISCENCES WRITTEN IN 1900 BY REV. WILLIAM FISHER AVERY.

I have been asked to trace briefly the history of those families most conspicuous for their usefulness, in the first two or three generations of the town. We must pass by a far greater company of those who have been truly useful in the home, the schools, and the churches, but less observed. We have in Conway now many whole-hearted workers, equal perhaps to any who have gone before them. But my task refers rather to previous generations, whose memory is growing dim and in danger of being altogether lost to most of their townsmen.

Let our rapid survey of one district after another have its beginning at the house of God.

In imagination we will go back sixty years and join the long row of plain, but full wagons, as they leave the old Congregational church. It is taking the winding road toward Cricket Hill. An equally long black line is seen across the valley, crawling up Field's Hill, and another, somewhat smaller, worming its way over as steep pitches to the east.

"Cricket Hill!" What a queer name to be linked in all its history to one district of the town just because some early hunters or surveyors were annoyed by crickets when camping for the night. But up Cricket Hill we are toiling on a warm Sabbath afternoon, the women and small children riding, numerous boys and men walking, and some with coats hanging upon their arms. It will take many of us an hour to reach our homes, hungry, but lifted up, if spiritually minded, by the weighty truths impressed upon us in the two preaching services and Sabbath School. I loved to walk in the rear of the carriages with the men, and hear their discussions of great gospel truths. Up three or four long hills we have been passing in diminished numbers to the first house of Captain Dunham, four or five carriages having turned to the right, on the road to the Eldridges' and Crittendens'. Captain Dunham was a lame, but energetic man. One tells me he would mend his fence on horseback,

as our wagons came in sight of Mr. Bates' home, the flames were seen just bursting from it. A fire had been left to bake the Thanksgiving dinner, while the family were faithful to the public duties of the day. Alas, it burned down the house leaving little but some nicely baked potatoes in their large bin. A few silver dollars laid aside for the seminary were drawn out of the ashes, considerably marred. These two sisters went to work and patiently earned the remainder of the two hundred dollars, which had been subscribed, not permitting the proposed school to suffer from their loss. Those scorched coins were laid up in the archives of the seminary.

Going a quarter of a mile west from here, we then came to the house of Deacon John Avery, about as early a settler, from Dedham, Mass. He spent a long, useful life there, dying September 1, 1847. Look now at the precious influences for good which went out afar from his family. His eldest son, named John, in youth fell from a tree, and drove a sharp stub far up into his foot. This very painful wound proved a rich blessing. It laid him by for a long time, in which his attention was drawn to reading. A thirst for education was aroused. He graduated at Yale, and at length became an honor to the Episcopal church, laboring successfully in North Carolina and then in Alabama. He never attained the dignity of bishop, as some of his northern friends supposed, but he became a fine linguist, mastering several languages and accumulating a valuable library of about five thousand volumes, some of them rare treasures. In the midst of great usefulness he was suddenly snatched away, leaving a widow with one son and two daughters. It was with very limited means that the children struggled up to a good education and positions of great usefulness. William became a physician, Fanny married the Episcopal rector in Greensboro, Ala., and Mary has lived in her family and taught a select school in the place, to the present time. Greensboro was the home of the Hobsons. There was trained by a noble Christian mother, Richmond Hobson, who periled his life to bottle up Cervera's fleet, in Santiago harbor. The Hobson children have been in Mary's private school and Sabbath School class, and under the preaching of Fanny's husband. Richmond's younger brother was asked, if it was not about time for him to leave

Mary Avery's Sabbath School class, but replied, "I want only one teacher." All through his youth Richmond Hobson manifested the same qualities of daring courage and generosity which he displayed at Santiago. Soon after that exploit the *Outlook* had a sketch of him in which it justly remarked that if there were more ministers like Rector Cobbs there would be more heroes like Richmond Hobson. At a dinner given in honor of Hobson, Mary Avery, who happened to be in New York at the time, was given the first seat at the hero's side. I then conclude that our country is much indebted to influences which had their source in the firstborn son of this early settler on Cricket Hill.

A daughter, named Rebecca Avery, married a farmer of Charlemont, Mass., whose name was Silas Hawks. Of several children only one lived to maturity.

After the early death of the father, this William Hawks and his mother removed to Williamsburg, Mass. He became deacon of the Congregational church there and prominent in all its Christian work. Being of rather slender constitution, he was unable to do much physical labor, but was a great reader and no mean thinker. Book after book was added to his private library. With painstaking care he fostered the little library in the village, thus helping much to turn public attention to the great advantages of a larger one. One of its citizens at length gave a munificent sum for the purpose. A handsome library building has been erected, with cases well filled. A son of Deacon William Hawks was selected to give the address at the dedication of this valuable library. Our neighboring town will readily admit that through Deacon John Avery's daughter, Rebecca, a refreshing stream of blessings has flowed to her also.

A boy, named William Fisher, was taken into John Avery's home, and helped in education, until he became a Congregational minister. I conclude he was a man of influence, or my parents would not have named me William Fisher, in his honor.

Recently I visited the spot where stood my grandfather's home. Only an old shed was standing, at a little distance from the cellar hole, and the flourishing lilac bushes back of it; I discovered the old well and carefully pushing aside the half decayed boards upon it, dropped in a stone. The sound showed that it plunged into deep water. I said to myself, as this well,

dug a century and a quarter ago, yields refreshing supplies still, so healing streams are yet flowing afar, from this early home, to bless many communities. Two other children of Deacon John Avery I wish to mention, in connection with their own homes, who will greatly increase the fulfillment to this good man of the promise, "His seed shall be blessed."

But now look a quarter of a mile north, to where Samuel Crittenden planted himself as early as 1772. In my boyhood his son Medad was filling his place, an old man with silvery locks but still erect, though very deaf. He used to stand close at Dr. Harris' side in the pulpit, and, with upturned ear, try to catch as much as possible of the sermon. It was a beautiful sight, for everybody loved and revered him, as like one of the ancient patriarchs, loaned to us for a time. In the midst of our Centennial addresses, his wife, Mary B. Crittenden, was presented to the great audience, as lacking only sixty-six days of being one hundred years old. She still lived almost two years.

Turning from this point a mile southward, we come to the place of another early settler, Elijah Nash. I thought my father far enough from church, the roads being so steep and stony. But this neighbor, next south, had to go almost half a mile further and up a steep hill. When the young wife was brought to this out-of-the-way place, to be cleared by hand toil, it may have seemed like throwing her life away. How little society could she expect outside her own family! Perhaps that concentrated the energies of those parents more upon the training of their own little ones. The rocky pastures, narrow mowings, and the distance from the village may have made those children, as they grew toward maturity, aspire to wider spheres of activity. Those parents could not have foreseen the greatness of the harvest for which they were sowing. I find Rev. John A. Nash one on the list of Congregational ministers who originated in Conway. I think I am safe in saying that he came from this home. He was born in 1789, graduated at Amherst College in 1824, being thirty-five, married Mary, the eldest daughter of Scotto Clark, over on Field's Hill, and lived till 1877, or eighty-eight years. What may not such a life have accomplished! His son Henry graduated at the same college in 1851 and for twenty

years taught a boys' school on Mount Pleasant, a little north of his alma mater.

The daughter Minerva of this early settler married Rev. Henry Eastman. They went as home missionaries to Michigan. One pastorate was at Somerset. When at length her husband died, Mrs. Eastman removed to Ann Arbor and educated her two sons amid its fine literary privileges. Afterwards one studied at West Point and became an officer in the army, the other became a physician. Mrs. Eastman's last years, spent in her native town, were a benediction to all about her. Her sister, Fidelia, married Mr. John Field and was the mother of Marshall Field.

Nor are these all the streams of influence which have flowed from that distant farmhouse. Within my memory Elijah Nash removed to the next town, Williamsburg, and a family by the name of Meekins came in his place. From that second home came Emory, who became partner in the great firm of Meekins, Packard & Wheat, Springfield, Mass. At his recent death very hearty tributes were paid his incorruptible integrity and Christian activity by different papers of the city. Every Conway man read with pride of such worth and usefulness in one of its sons.

Let us now retrace our steps half a mile to the plain farmhouse of Deacon Joseph Avery, son of Deacon John Avery, already mentioned. He married in 1788, Sylvia, sister of Deacon John Clary, living at the other end of the town. Their happy married life continued forty years and my father reached his seventy-eighth year. Not long before the death of Samuel Harris I met him in New Haven, when he at once alluded with much warmth, to my parents, remarking, "Your father's biography ought to have been written," and "your mother would have graced any circle in the land." For nine years he was their pastor and intimate associate in all Christian work. I am asked to speak freely of this Joseph Avery, as one of Conway's truly useful men. I think I have never met persons more thoroughly consecrated to the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom than my father and mother. The brief sentence upon our mother's tombstone expresses her life purpose, "Live for Christ." Some might say that the father in this small and plain house