Dr. A. Wetmore
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Uncles

BY

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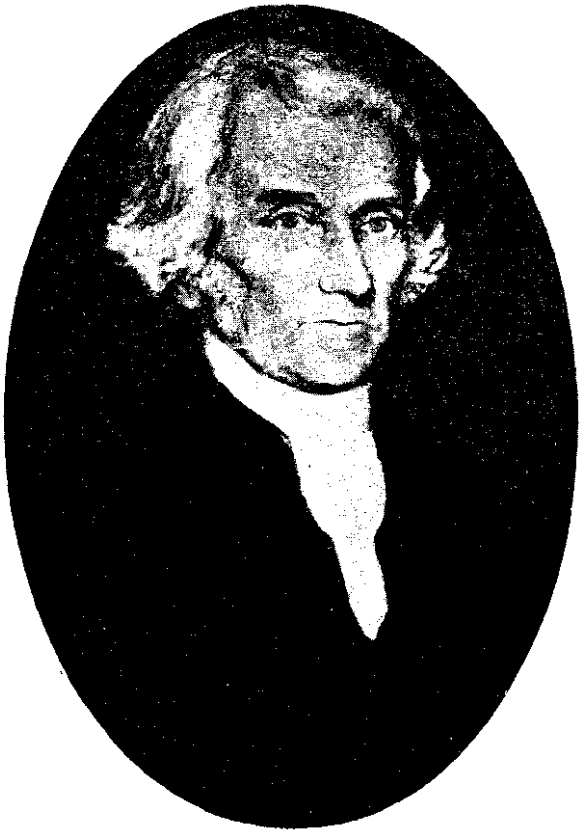


GRANDFATHER EZRA ABBOT

Uncles

BY CHARLES G. ABBOT

Cousin Zebediah, despite his stiff leg, had ridden down to our house with the milkman to talk things over with Uncle Abiel. Those are Bible names, but I used to wonder if even those holy saints of ancient days might not have shortened them, as we did, fondly, to "Cousin 'Diah" and "Uncle 'Bial."

As a small boy I used to think it was wonderfully interesting to hear these old gentlemen talk. We had an immense piece of veneered mahogany furniture in our living room that we called "the secretary." My father had a locked drawer as well as a tool drawer in it and used to make up his accounts there. It had also a bookshelf on the top, with Well's "Every Man His Own Lawyer" and other useful but rather uninviting books, in addition to the great family Bible and Jay's "Family Prayers." Every morning my father read a chapter, and my mother a long prayer, while, perhaps, the hired man, with me upon his lap, rather sacrilegiously practiced me silently in my pet tricks of throwing my thumbs out of joint or wiggling my ears.

Under the "secretary," between its four great S-shaped legs, with their large square connecting braces, was a fine listening post for me, altogether unobserved. On this day, after "Cousin 'Diah" had several times pursed his lips, and given out what just escaped being a prolonged whistle, as was his custom in deep thought, he spoke as follows:

"Abiel, had you heard that the new Baptist clergyman in the middle of the town is a Democrat?"

"No," said "Uncle 'Bial."

More lip action from "Cousin 'Diah," then:

"Abiel, can you understand how a college-educated man can be a Democrat?"

"No," said "Uncle 'Bial."

In his youth Uncle 'Bial graduated from Bowdoin College, and studied for the ministry. From what I knew of him, at more than three score years and ten, and heard about him from others, I suspect he never preached because he could never get to church in season. But he was a highly cultured man, a master of English style in writing, and a man of all the courtesy of the old school.

My father appears to have had about all the enterprise that descended to Grandfather's large family, and I think Grandfather recognized it. In his will he gave Father three fourths of the homestead, and also the potato starch manufacturing business, but charged him to see to it that his brothers and sisters never came to distress. So it happened that when I was a boy, Uncle Nelson, who had the other quarter of Grandfather's homestead, leaned heavily on brother Harris, while Aunt Rebecca and Uncle 'Bial lived at our house till they died, at 81 and 89 years, respectively. My mother told me after Father's death that she had never lived alone with him except for about three weeks just after their marriage. In my time she had a free hotel in summer. We used to sit down at table with over 20 persons, many of them visiting relatives.

Uncle Ezra, named for Grandfather, taught school in Virginia before the War, and Uncle 'Bial was also there with him for a few years. But they foresaw the War coming, and Uncle Ezra went to Minnesota as

a pioneer settler, where his youngest brother, Uncle John, joined him and lived for many years, partly as a surveyor, but more I suspect, as the same kind of guest with Ezra that Uncle 'Bial had been with Father.

I never saw Uncle Ezra, but once heard a story about him that showed how courteous he was, and how gallant he was with the ladies, like Uncle 'Bial. One day Uncle Ezra was driving a pair of oxen along the road of the new town, where mud abounded of the fine black type that makes agriculture in the middle west so prosperous. They met a pair of ladies, and Uncle Ezra commanded the oxen:

"Gee! Star! Gee! Bright! Let the ladies pass!"

And after the maneuver was accomplished:

"Ah! Thank you, Star! And you, Bright, also!"

Aunt Sarah, his wife, told me that when the Indian uprising of Civil War times occurred in Minnesota, the men went to fight, but she and Claudia, her daughter agreed to kill themselves together rather than be captured by the Sioux.

I may have hinted above that my uncles were not very energetic. A fellow townsman, referring to the intellectual standing of our family, once said in an eulogistic speech:

"The Abbots have an *infinite* capacity for the consideration of a subject!" This speech of praise was sometimes slyly twisted by Aunt Fanny, Uncle Joseph Hale's wife, as follows: "As Ephraim Brown once said, "The Abbots have an infinite capacity for the *consideration* of a subject!" I do not think her husband was quite so much inclined that way as some of his brothers and sisters, but to speak less delicately than Aunt Fanny, I have known of some Abbots who perhaps skated on the thin ice around being downright

lazy, and who never achieved being on time for anything but their births.

To illustrate:

When Uncle Ezra died in Minnesota I was but four years old. But I remember how the old mare, Jessie, stood tied to the pine tree at the corner of the yard for a half hour, waiting to take Uncle 'Bial in the sleigh to the station. He felt that "he could hardly spare the time, and must be back in a few months," but it was thought he might be a comfort and help with Uncle Ezra's family. So old Jessie waited in the snow, as the minutes passed, till at last, after repeated urgings, Uncle 'Bial got ready to go. They had to gallop poor Jessie to reach the noon train, but they made it. Eight years passed before Uncle 'Bial's return, despite the supposed urgency of his preoccupations. He returned after the deaths of Aunt Rebecca and Father, and was appointed administrator to Aunt Rebecca's estate. Fortunately my father's estate was administered by Mother.

Years went on, while Uncle 'Bial dozed by the fireplace, or wrote in his diary, or read the thermometer, or carried on his other urgent occupations. After thirteen years he passed away, leaving Aunt Rebecca's estate still unsettled. So Uncle John who had come back to the old home four years earlier, was appointed administrator to both Aunt Rebecca's and Uncle 'Bial's estates. He carried on in much the same way that Uncle 'Bial had set as an example for nearly ten years. Then a New York sharper got hold of Uncle John in his old age and induced him to reinvest the corpus of the two estates, then perhaps $2,000, in some scheme that the scoundrel represented to be sure of large returns. That was the last the heirs ever saw of the estates. When Uncle John died, a few months later,

My Father,
Harris Abbot

My Mother,
Caroline Ann (Greeley)

my brother was appointed and cleared up the three estates of Rebecca, Abiel, and John in very short order.

Aunt Fanny, Uncle Joseph Hale's widow, I remember I held in great veneration as a small boy. She was a handsome, distinguished-looking old lady, and a brilliant conversationalist. There is a wonderful sea story from her pen in the Atlantic Monthly for August 1871, describing the escape of her father, Captain Henry Larcom, from shipwreck.

We children used to consider it a great event when Aunt Fanny dined or supped with us. It would put Uncle 'Bial on his mettle, and the conversational bout between them, gemmed by old reminiscences, was indeed something to hear. My father used to employ in summer a field hand named Tom Jackson, who had been a Union soldier, and had traveled with Barnum's Circus. Jackson liked to talk about his adventures, and was not at all inclined to understatement.

One day, at supper, Aunt Fanny and Uncle 'Bial were carrying on a spirited conversation, when Jackson, who, according to New England farm custom, was at the table, felt called on to bring in his experiences. After this nuisance had gone on some time, Uncle 'Bial mildly inquired:

"Jackson, did you ever see a *gyasticuticus?*"

"Yes," said Jackson. "We had a big one in the circus."

But before he could enlarge on the nature of the creature, there came such a burst of laughter as suppressed Jackson for the rest of the meal.

Uncle 'Bial was deeply versed in the genealogy of the Abbots and their relatives, and in the history of his native town. He was a surveyor, and used to be employed occasionally to run old farm boundary lines, when transfers of property were to be made. He used

also to survey old lines sometimes for his own satisfaction, to find the "stake and stones" mentioned in some old yellowed deed.

As a boy I used to delight to go with him on these surveying expeditions, carrying the rear end of the chain, and picking up the pins. And what a joy it was to dig around in the decayed forest leaves, till we found the little circle of stones, with the old rotted stake at their center! Then, too, there were the interesting stories of the families, long dead and gone, who used to live where now we found only the tumbled-in cellar hole overgrown with weeds, to mark where the house had stood.

As the well-known possessor of this ancient lore, Uncle 'Bial was called on by the editor, his cousin Sewall Putnam, to prepare some sections of the Town History, and to give advice on others. One day Sewall Putnam rode up from the village to see Uncle 'Bial, and spent the night at our house. At breakfast, next morning, they got deeply into their discussions. When noon came, my sister asked them to draw back a little, that she might set the table for dinner.

"Dinner!" said they. "Why surely it cannot be dinnertime! It seems but a few minutes since we had breakfast!"

In the afternoon it fell to me to drive Sewall Putnam back to the village. With our slow farm horse it used to take at least forty minutes. As we drove out of the yard, I asked Mr. Putnam to tell me the Revolutionary War story of the Parker family. I had long known it from Uncle 'Bial's lips, but I wished to try a little experiment.

Just as I expected, Sewall Putnam had gotten but a little way into the story before he detoured into a side branch of it. From this he detoured again, and again,

like the branching of a tree. When we reached the village, he had not yet come near to the point of the Parker story!

Uncle 'Bial's principal contributions to the Town History were the story of the manufacture of potato starch, established by my Grandfather and his brother Samuel, and the genealogy of the Abbots and their connections. The letter A, as everyone knows, stands first in our alphabet. But all the other families in the town having reported, and the history having reached page proof, Uncle 'Bial's genealogy of the Abbots was still lacking. So it came in at the end of the volume as a sort of appendix. It thus stands a monument to the fact that Abbots have "an infinite capacity for the *consideration* of a subject."

My life has been spent largely in experimental science. It was very fortunate for me that I took the course in precision of measurements with Prof. S. W. Holman, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He taught me that, in reaching a certain accuracy of the result, the several quantities which enter into it have the unequal influences. Some perhaps must be measured to the highest attainable degree of accuracy, while for others an error of 1 per cent, or even in some cases 5 per cent, may be allowable, without loss of accuracy in the desired result. It would be foolish to waste time to measure these latter quantities to the same degree of precision required for those which are really crucial.

For Uncle 'Bial no such rule applied. Like the builders of the Cathedral at Milan, whose every sculpture, though hidden away on the roof, is as perfect as those most conspicious, Uncle 'Bial did everything equally painstakingly. Not a word could be changed in his writing without injury. Even when he shoveled

snow off the doorstep, he cut perfectly square blocks of even size for every shovelful. The shovel itself was a masterpiece. The long handle was straight, round, and smooth. The wooden blade was evenly chamfered on its edge, and strongly braced at the handle. A tin shoe, with exactly parallel edges, protected the wooden blade from injury. Whatever Uncle 'Bial made of wood, metal or leather was finished like a work of art. Time was no object to him compared to finish.

One of Uncle 'Bial's urges toward perfection used to annoy me. I was the genius who rode the horse rake, drove the hay wagon, and "loaded and pitched off," when a fairly grown lad. As all farmers' boys know, a horse rake leaves a few straws and wisps of hay on the field. This seemed a wicked waste to Uncle 'Bial, who had grown up before days of horse rakes. So, after we had cleared a field, Uncle 'Bial would take the "bull rake," and slowly drag the entire area over again after me. When he was quite through, after a day or two of tedious dragging, he would have collected a pitchfork full of hay into a pile in the middle of the field. Then I had to make a special trip for it, boyishly deriding in my inmost thoughts such old-fashioned ways.

I used to tell my observers at astronomical field stations about him, and warn them not to let "the spirit of my uncle" get too much control of them. The worst example of it was when one of them used trigonometry to compute the length and angles of a diagonal brace, to be nailed onto the wooden door of a privy!

There were natural-fruit apple trees, that bore sour little apples, scattered about in our pastures. Uncle 'Bial made himself a grafting kit, with hammer, wedges, and knives. He made a neat case of leather

and wood with a place for every tool. With this he went about the pastures, grafting scions of that fine old-fashioned New England apple, the Baldwin, into these wild trees. So now, sixty years afterwards, you may sometimes find an old tree, with a few knurly Baldwins, in a wood which has grown up in the old pastureland.

But his most appreciated association with these wild apples occurred in October of every year. A lot of wild apples, and some Baldwins and sweets, would be taken to mill and ground and pressed for cider. The yield of three or four barrels would be carted to an out-of-door fireplace, which Uncle 'Bial had built. There was a great ledge of rock that slightly overhung, two rock walls at its ends, and a large beam across from wall to wall. Here would be hung two great brass kettles. All day, from early morn till long after dark, Uncle 'Bial would watch the fire, till all of the cider was boiled down, about three and a half measures into one.

During the following week, neighbors would help us pare and quarter ten bushels of sweet apples, and three bushels of Baldwins. Then, on a busy day, my mother would stew all of these quarters in the boiled cider, in great copper kettles set in brickwork in our kitchen. In the end, there would be about thirty gallons of boiled cider apple sauce, to be put away in a barrel in the shed. There it would freeze and thaw, freeze and thaw, all winter. At every meal a large bowlful came on the table, to be eaten with bread or doughnuts. Uncle 'Bial, however, used it with everything. He even would cover a plate of hash with it!

We were a great reading family. In the long winter evenings we all sat around the kerosene lamp on the table in the living room, before the open fire, each one

immersed in his paper or book. Perhaps, now and then, someone would be dozing off, if the day's work had been long and hard. My folks took the Youth's Companion almost from its beginning. Every Wednesday it was looked for avidly, and I read it from cover to cover. The older people, too, seemed to find it interesting. But we had magazines and books as well as papers. General Grant's memoirs in the Century were coming out, as were also extracts from Nicolay and Hay's "Lincoln." Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn," and Helen Jackson's "Ramona" found readers in our family.

We were also a great family for saving things. I used to get the steel springs for my cap-pistols, and other gadgets, out of the departed aunt's hoop skirts that I found in the garret. There were also heaps of old Youth's Companions up there. I used to read continued stories from them, till I got so cold that my teeth chattered. Uncle 'Bial subscribed for the Unitarian paper "Christian Register" for years and years. At the end of the year he tied up all the issues in a neat consecutive bundle, and put them on a shelf in the garret. There were tons of old papers and books up there.

Uncle 'Bial's main cache, however, was his own room. Under the bed, behind the bed, at the foot of the bed, and covering chairs and stands, were his treasures of old shoes, old hats, old clothes, old papers, books and what not. There was a path from the door leading down the back stairs to the door leading down the front stairs, but that was all.

I can hardly believe, now, as I look back, that he was 75 years old when he returned from Minnesota, in 1884, and nearly 80 when I had most companionship with him. His spare frame was as upright, his step as

UNCLE ABIEL ABBOT

springy, and his countenance as animated as if he were only 60.

Uncle 'Bial's winter schedule always amused us. After breakfast, with its liberal helpings of boiled cider apple sauce on any medium that presented itself, he read the thermometer at 8 o'clock, to record in his diary. In slowly written, carefully formed lettering, and without a word misused, he then wrote up the incidents of the preceding day. Then he turned to his newspapers and "Christian Register." The warm radiation of the open fire would encourage him to doze by 11 o'clock, and while he slept, the fire went nearly out. If there had been a snow in the night, he carved out square blocks of snow with his famous wooden shovel, and threw them in a certain invariable place until he had cleared the great flat stone door-flagging that Grandfather had laid.

At 12 o'clock the thermometer was again recorded.

After noon dinner, Uncle 'Bial continued reading and dozing before the open fire until about 2 o'clock. Then he laid two small sticks exactly parallel to the iron fire frame. Upon them he set his overshoes to warm, but with their heels turned down, wrong side out, in his special manner. At about 3:30 he got his gray muffler, folded it in a certain way, crossed its ends over his short gray beard, and imprisoned them under his buttoned-up coat. He then put on his overshoes, took his ancient Derby, his walking stick, and started briskly up the road.

He was very gallant with the ladies, and would make one or two warmly-welcomed calls before his return, about 5 o'clock. He then brought in a great back log of maple or oak for the fireplace, and filled the wood box with smaller sticks, built up a roaring fire, and was ready for supper. With evening came reading

with the family about the kerosene lamp on the table before the fire. At 8 o'clock the thermometer was again recorded. I must not forget one of Uncle 'Bial's inventions. He would find a long straight shoot of elder wood, punch the pith out with a long steel wire, and use the tube, thus prepared, to blow the kindling fire from a pleasant distance while sitting comfortably in his chair.

Several of my schoolboy friends had sleds which we called "double-runners." They comprised two short sleds, with a long, wide board connecting in such a way that while the rear sled was cross-hinged to the board, the front sled turned on a vertical pin under its front end. A cross brace at the extreme front end was attached to the board, to support the end thrust of the steersman's feet, who could guide by the ropes attached to the front points of the front sled. As many as eight or ten boys and girls would crowd onto the long board and slide down a long steep hill in the sleigh tracks of the road. I verily believe they went as fast as a mile a minute, sometimes. Sleighs would obligingly turn out for them if they could.

Uncle 'Bial offered to make me a double-runner, using my older sister's "Active" and my brother's sled "Rover." He began it in October. When the snow was almost all gone, in early April, in a small boy's desperation I nailed it together, much to Uncle 'Bial's annoyance. He considered the artistic finish quite spoiled, and myself unduly impatient. But he made for me a wonderful stock for a crossbow, or "bow-gun" as we called it. When I was eleven years old I managed to get under a hen hawk on a tree, shot an arrow, and brought the bird down. It was a proud lad who nailed the hawk onto the shed door. It stretched four feet from tip to tip of wings. When the milkman

drove by he said: "Who killed that hawk." "Charley did," said my mother.

My pride was greatly hurt when I found a notice in our county paper which said: "Charley Abbot, 13 years old, shot a four-foot hen hawk with his bowgun." I thought any boy 13 years old might have done it, but I was only eleven, and that seemed to me a great deal more glorious.

It seems strange to think of Uncle 'Bial as a business man, but Grandfather, when in failing health in 1846, placed him for a short time in charge of the manufacture of potato starch. Uncle 'Bial has left an account of the business, from which I shall quote. Great Uncle Samuel had discussed with Grandfather the possibility of concentrating in some way the values of the potato, so that they could be marketed over the bad roads of those days without undue cost.

". . . Experiments to obtain sugar resulted only in grape sugar, or glucose; and this idea was abandoned. Starch in small quantity for domestic use had been previously obtained from potatoes by means of a hand grater and subsequent washings. But to obtain it in large quantity with machinery and a greater power was not known ever to have been attempted. To do this successfully would not only create a better market for potatoes, but it promised remuneration for expense by furnishing a valuable article for extensive consumption. Mutual interchange of ideas on the subject finally led to action.

"Early in the fall of 1811, as appears, a building about twenty feet square was erected, at his own expense, by Ezra Abbot, near his house, the lower story for a horse to turn a shaft, connected in the second story with machinery for washing and grat-

ing the potatoes; the same story to have apparatus for cleansing the starch with water made to flow in from a small brook, also a set of wide shallow drawers with fire underneath for drying it, the whole costing about $200. Months passed before the machinery was all in place. Meanwhile its object excited much wonderment in the neighborhood. From an evasive answer to some inquisitive person, that it was 'to make Free-masons by water,' it was styled 'Free-masons' Hall.' After it was started 'no admittance' on the door continued the mystery some time longer.

"The first starch seems to have been made in the spring of 1812; and for five or six years Ezra Abbot continued to manufacture starch in mild weather of fall and spring, from potatoes only of his own raising, kept in winter in his house cellar and taken to the mill as wanted. He had machinery to work only about a dozen bushels at a time, and did not work every day; he made one year about 6000 pounds of starch, at the rate of eight pounds of starch to each bushel of potatoes. For a market, he made repeated visits to Boston, Salem, Newburyport, Andover and other towns, selling some and leaving some to be sold on account; he sold at eight cents a pound, but traders often put it as high as twenty cents. It was used in families for puddings and otherwise, and was recommended by druggists as a delicate food for invalids. About 1817 John Smith, Esq., of Peterborough, after many failures, succeeded in making it good size for use in cotton manufacture; and about the same time Mr. Paul Moody at Waltham experimented with it for the same purpose, long in vain, but with hints from Mr. Smith, and having a lot of it on hand, persevered till

he succeeded and wanted more. Ezra Abbot's first mill was an experiment, to try machinery and a market. Being now well assured of both, Ezra and Samuel Abbot decided to build on a larger scale.

"In 1818 the site of an old disused sawmill in the near border of Mason was purchased . . . and henceforth the brothers gave their united energies to the business under the firm of E. & S. Abbot. For many months they were much together, especially in evenings and far into the night, consulting and devising the requisite machinery, much of which differed from that in the first mill and involved the application of new principles. . . . It was March, 1820, when they commenced operations on their three thousand bushels of potatoes. . . . There being no law for the weight of a bushel of potatoes, they adopted as an average of weighings by themselves and neighbors, the rule of sixty-four pounds to the bushel. As crops were light or abundant, their stocks of potatoes varied in quantity; . . . their largest stock, in 1830, was over twenty-six thousand bushels. . . .

"Experience and observation gradually taught the partners improved processes, especially in securing the finer, lighter starch, which, being of nearly the same specific gravity as the light part of the refuse or 'grains,' had been difficult to separate. But their best skill did not suffice to obtain all the starch of the potato. Of the ten, twelve or more pounds in a bushel, according to quality, more or less escaped with the 'grains,' to be fed to cattle and hogs, and more or less flowed off with the potato juice into the brook to double and treble the hay crops in the meadows below. The amount of starch obtained per bushel in different years ranged from seven and

one-third to nine and two-thirds pounds. . . . The quantity of starch manufactured also varied greatly, from 10½ tons in 1820 to 119½ tons in 1830-31. . . . There was immediate demand for their starch at Peterborough and at Waltham. In a year or two cotton mills were erected in Lowell, Nashua and other places, which called for starch, and there was no difficulty in disposing of all they could make. The wholesale price ranged at different times from three and one-half to five one-half cents a pound.

. . . . . .

"In the season of 1846 Ezra Abbot, from failure of health, was able to visit the mill only once or twice, and devolved the charge of it on his son, Abiel Abbot. On his decease, April 3d, 1847, his sons, Abiel and Harris Abbot, became joint owners under the name of A. & H. Abbot. They continued the manufacture of starch four or five years with stocks of potatoes diminishing from the united effects of the disease and of the coming of railroads; both causes combined to raise greatly the price of potatoes for general consumption. The last stock received was between one and two thousand bushels. The mill was sold and converted into a saw and stave mill."

Great Uncle Samuel seems to have been the inventive and mechanical genius of our family. He was lamentably burned to death in the destruction of a starch mill at Jaffrey, New Hampshire, which he had helped to build, and which he was operating. I have a book, "Elements of Technology" by Jacob Bigelow, 1829, over which when a boy I used to pore, almost freezing, seeking to understand the steam engine and the striking clock. It is autographed "S. Abbot."

Our township was divided into ten school districts. Ours was District No. 5. Our neighborhood had collected a library of several hundred books, which was kept in a hall of "Cousin 'Diah's" house. Uncle 'Bial served without pay for many years as librarian. He took a loving care of the books, restitching and covering such as needed it, and managing, with the few dollars available, to get as many new books as possible. One of our neighbors was an eccentric man whose hobby was town histories of New Hampshire. He would always present to our library a copy of each new one published. Consequently he was much concerned when "Cousin 'Diah" died, and his house was shut up. He came to see Uncle 'Bial about it. My brother Stanley loved to tell about their conversation.

Said Neighbor Spaulding: "Abiel, I can't see any future for the library. There hain't no perpetuerity about it. You and I are old, and soon will go. The young folks won't keep it up. There's Stanley. He ain't no good!" Nevertheless the library went on in Cousin Kate's keeping for many years, but finally, I think, with Spaulding's beloved town histories, went to our handsome little public library, built some years later in the village by a public-spirited citizen.

Speaking of libraries, it is claimed that the old minister of Peterborough, Great Uncle Abiel, was the man who established the first free public library in the United States. Of this old saint his son said: "During the last winter of his life, when 93 years old, he made it a point to read every day two chapters of the New Testament, critically, in the original Greek. In the evenings of that winter I read him several treatises of Cicero, among others *De Oratore* and *De Senectute*. Thus his mind and heart continued growing to the end."

As my father died from an accident before I was twelve years old, I knew him only as a child. I have wondered how he would have seemed to me if he had lived till I reached man's estate. Like other children, I loved to ride with him when he drove on errands a few miles away. Though a rather silent man, we had great confidence in him, and would prattle away to him, and ask where this road or that road went, and who lived on it. My mother, though 24 years younger, worshipped him, and never thought of another marriage, though still a young and beautiful woman at his death. All the neighbors trusted and consulted him.

We had near neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. James Searle, only a quarter of a mile away through the woods, but at least a mile and a half round the road. We children thought it rather romantic to follow the woody path, among anemones and trilliums, ferns and blueberries, down to the Searles place. Mr. Searle, with only a bit of a farm, dilapidated buildings, and straitened means, was the very kindest of neighbors, glad to help in any emergency. If we had sickness he would "slip up" as he would express it, every day to inquire and offer help. Sometimes, in the autumn, he would come driving over with his rickety old wagon, and hand us a large Hubbard squash of his raising "to try." On such an occasion my father would steal away quietly to the barn, and bring an 8-quart can of cool milk to set in the back of Searle's wagon unannounced.

On the night after Father was hurt, I felt a very heavy responsibility on my twelve-year old shoulders. Ten cows had to be milked before six o'clock of the dark cold winter morning, and nobody else seemed available. Mother heard a noise, and came out into the kitchen in the night to find me collecting the

milking pails and the cans, and lighting the lantern to go out to the barn.

"Why Charley," said she, "What are you doing?"

"It's time to begin milking," I said.

"Oh, no," she answered. "Why it's only 12 o'clock. You go to bed, and I will wake you in good time in the morning."

I had gotten up, dressed, brought in the milk cans and milk pails from out of doors, and had lighted the lantern, all this while fast asleep!

When I opened the barn door, about 5 o'clock next morning, who should I see but our kind neighbor, Mr. Searle, who had "slipped up" with his lantern through the deep snow in the woods to help out.

Mrs. Searle's sister was Mrs. Rufus Stowe. Her husband was a short, round, jolly little man, who made shoes. He was a great favorite with the neighbors, and had managed to become a high degree Mason. He was also a great church goer. He had a rather dingy long black coat, and tall silk hat, that he always wore to lodge and church. I overtook Uncle Rufus once walking up the long hill after church. We walked silently a long way. I supposed he was pondering the sermon or some high and pious thoughts, and tried my best to think of something fit to bring up on such a pious occasion. At length I thought I had it and said to him: "Uncle Rufus, what do you suppose Heaven will be like?" He thought awhile, and was no doubt surprised enough at such a question from a small boy. Then he said: "Well, Charley, the Bible says 'the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'"

And so it is. You may so fill your mind with interests, and joys, and sweet recollections, that sickness and anxiety and want are all robbed of part of their sting. Even in war so great a Christian and scientist

as Sir Edgeworth David of Australia kept his interests, his kindliness, and his helpfulness, as well as his bravery at the full, even though he was terribly injured in the line of duty.

I heard some neighbors talking on the day my father was buried. Cousin 'Diah, who was a great churchgoer, said: "I think Harris was the best Christian I ever knew." This despite the fact that father was not a church member. Another neighbor said: "Do you know what he did when he sold that cow to the man down beyond Milford for $35, and a very good cow it was, too?" "No," said someone. "Harris drove way down there a few days afterwards and insisted that the man take back $5. He said that on reflection he had decided that the cow was worth only $30."

Perhaps I ought to say a few more words about Cousin 'Diah. He was a very social man. He loved to talk to anybody, young or old, about any subject whatever. He was a great reader, and his mind was stored with a wealth of information. Like other Abbots, sometimes he would get so immersed in thought that he would be oblivious to time or company.

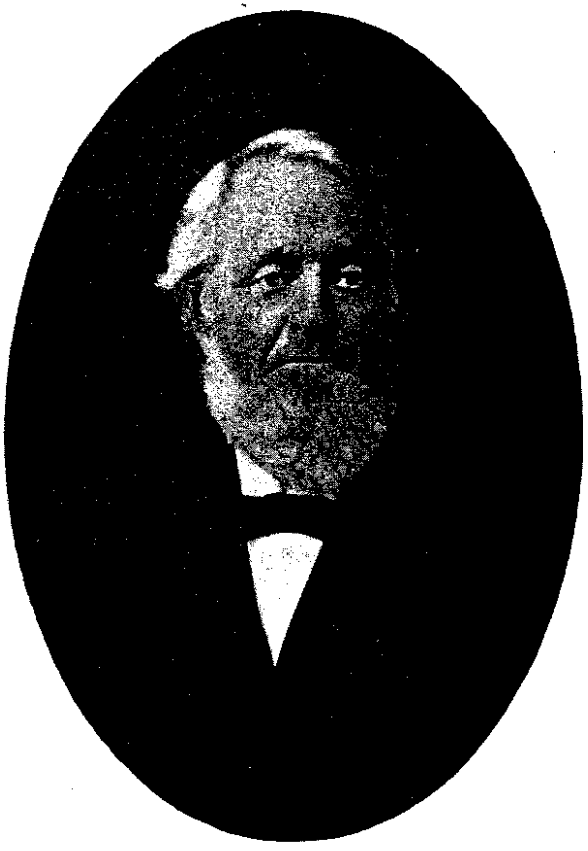
One Sunday, before he became infirm, he walked into the house, and sat down, and inquired if dinner would soon be ready. His son, Dwight, said:

"Why father, mother isn't here and you came up without the horse. What has happened?"

"Well, I declare!" said Cousin 'Diah. "I believe I must have left them down to the meeting!"

That must surely have been a more interesting church service than I generally attend, that would so absorb one's thoughts that he would walk four miles up hill, without once thinking of his horse.

He had a rattle-brained hired man in his old age. One day he stumped out to the barn with his stiff leg,



ZEBEDIAH ABBOTT

and looked about with growing disapproval. After pursing his lips, and letting out his characteristic prolonged semi-whistle several times, he said:

"I declare, Fred, I verily believe that disorder is the normal state of your mind!"

This article really needs to be illustrated. My readers will be edified by the pictures I have of Uncle 'Bial, Cousin 'Diah, Uncle Hermon and others.

The man who had most occasion to be grateful to Father was Uncle Nelson. He inherited the other quarter of Grandfather's homestead. Uncle Nelson was diligent in a puttering sort of way, but had only two things that he did really well. One was to make a fine garden. He had all of Uncle 'Bial's finicky passion for finish, and his garden had its rows perfectly spaced, perfectly straight, and the plants beautifully worked about and hilled up. The poles for the beans were absolutely vertical, and were exactly even in height. The plants seemed to respond as if they loved Uncle Nelson, for he really raised the best vegetables of anybody around. The rest of his farm, however, slumped down and down. The hay crop went nearly to nothing, so that he could only keep two or three cows, and a single horse. When I was a boy, trees 30 feet high had grown up in some of his mowing fields.

Uncle Nelson's other special accomplishment was to put out the clothes line on Mondays for his wife's washing. That he did to perfection. It took him a half hour, at least, but every part was at equal tension, and the distribution of the several stretches covered the back yard with complete symmetry.

Uncle Nelson was a very pious man. He prayed long at family prayers each morning. He never failed to go to church on Sunday and to midweek prayer

meeting on Wednesday night. These trips with his white horse, "Old Charley," would take at least three quarters of an hour to go, and an hour to return. But rain or snow, planting season or hay time, they were always made by Uncle Nelson.

The gay sparks in the village irreverently made sport of slow pious Uncle Nelson. They used to tell with glee about the time "Old Charley" got scared and ran away with him. "How did it happen, Mr. Nelson?" they asked. Uncle Nelson described the incident thus: "I said 'Whoa' three times, distinctly, but he paid no attention whatever."

Aunt Hannah was the very antithesis of him, brisk, quick of speech, early rising, and hard working. She would always have her work done early in the afternoon, and would bring her knitting over to our house and gossip with Mother, while Mother pursued her longer household tasks. Aunt Hannah was the only woman I ever saw spinning woolen yarn with the great wheel.

Uncle Nelson had three children, Edward, Kate, and Walter. Edward struck out for himself when he was old enough, and became an express messenger on a Canadian railroad. He did a good deal for a friend in his last sickness, and the family of his friend gratefully gave Cousin Ed the young man's 44 caliber Remington rifle. In Cousin Ed's vacations at home, several of the young cousins would practice with him at a target with this weapon.

When I got to be about 13 years old, I ventured to ask and received permission to use the rifle during the rest of the year, when Ed was away. I occasionally was able to hit a woodchuck with it. One day about 10 o'clock in the forenoon, I saw some crows pulling up young corn, way down behind our barn. I went

over and asked Aunt Hannah to let me have the rifle. She said: "You know where it is in our closet. Go and help yourself."

So I went into their bedroom, and opened the closet door. There was Uncle Nelson on his knees, praying, among his wife's dresses. He interpreted literally the saying: "When thou prayest, enter thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

It was a little embarrassing for me and for him. But he handed me the rifle. I fired at a crow and missed him, and they all flew away for that time, but soon returned to pull up more corn. Although Uncle Nelson was shiftless and not too bright, and perhaps just a little ridiculous, one could not help but love him. He had such a kindly goodness shining out of his countenance, that one felt, instinctively that, whatever his shortcomings, you were not the one worthy to deal proudly with him.

His daughter, Cousin Kate, was a very clever woman. After her parents' deaths, she rearranged the farmhouse to entertain "city boarders," as we used to call them. Her place became very well known and highly appreciated. There was a choice New Hampshire mountain prospect towards the west, and beauties of trees and landscapes in all directions. She was one of the most cultured persons in town and was one of the most helpful in civic affairs. She had a saving sense of humor, which her father had totally lacked. I recall that when she was making the changes in the house, she mischievously told me *sotto voce:* "I found so many dilapidated old Bibles and Sunday School books in the garret that I did not know what to do." "What did you decide to do with them?" said I.

"Hush!" said she. "I burned them. But for Heaven's sake don't tell!"

Thanksgiving and Christmas were great days in my young life. Aunt Harriet had married her distant cousin, Hermon Abbott, and they lived about a mile and a half up the road. The three families met every year at our house for Thanksgiving day. There was a bountiful dinner with turkey, cranberry sauce, apple and squash pies, and all sorts of vegetables. Cider applesauce, of course, was there, too.

After dinner everybody was weighed by Uncle 'Bial. That was a function in itself. We had a great steelyard scale in the shed room. A rope sling, with his specially made board seat, covered by a thick cushion, was hung from the hook and balanced. The person to be weighed would sit in this swing, amid jokes and laughter, till Uncle 'Bial had carefully balanced him, and set down the result. After the weighing, the young, growing people trooped over to Uncle Nelson's kitchen, where a great vertical post stood unpainted for generations. Here the young subject would stand backed up to the post, till Uncle 'Bial drew a horizontal line just level with the top of his head, and marked the subject's name, age, and the date on the post with a sharp pencil.

We were singing families, and after these ceremonies were over, the rest of the day was given over to singing of hymns, choruses, glees, and to conversation.

Christmas was also a joint celebration, observed in rotation at the three houses, year after year. A beautiful little hemlock tree would be found, cut, and set up in the parlor. Then, while the children were mysteriously excluded and on tiptoe with expectation, the young ladies, including perhaps the schoolteacher, if she could not go to her own home, loaded the tree

with scores of gifts. These ranged from bags of candy, pencils, diaries, and handkerchiefs, to skates, rubber boots, and warm knit mittens and mufflers. Great secrecy had been preserved in the weeks before by everybody in preparing these gifts.

After the evening chores were done, the doors were opened and everybody thronged in. The time spent by our elders in admiring the tree seemed all too long to us youngsters. But finally Uncle 'Bial would begin to take the presents away, one by one, and hand them, with appropriate jokes and remarks, to the recipients. Everybody got some. Care was taken not to omit the hired men or the serving girls. But the youngest got the most. Sometimes as many as 25 of the presents came to me. It was an evening of wild excitement, and though I was allowed to sit up an hour later than usual, bedtime came, I thought, far too early.

Uncle Hermon, universally known as "Deacon Hermon Abbott," was one of the best and the handsomest men our town ever produced. His integrity and excellent judgment were greatly relied upon. He served the town six years as Selectman. He died of tuberculosis when I was about ten years old. My love for the hymn "Jerusalem the Golden" dates from the day of his funeral. Both words and music impressed themselves indelibly on my memory that day.

Uncle Hermon had a brother, Amos, who went out to India as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He married, May 12, 1834, Anstice Wilson, and they sailed eleven days later for Bombay. They joined the Muratha Mission at Ahmednuggur, and conducted a school there for many years. With short furloughs in America, they and their children devoted themselves to India for half a century. Their son, Justin Abbott, became

a great Muratha scholar, and translated and published much of the Muratha classical literature. He also became a foremost worker in the suppression of the scourge of leprosy, and in late life served on several United States Government commissions with this object. This family so won the love and veneration of the Indian people that when I was in Bombay, in 1926, nothing that the native Christians could do for me seemed to them enough to show their veneration for the very name of Abbott. They loaded me with flowers, drove me about in their old Ford auto, and made me address the school, as if I was a wonderful personage.

Uncle Hermon's family were our best singers. He led our church choir for many years, and his son, Willis, led all the musical gatherings in the region whenever he was available. They tell this story of Uncle Hermon. In those days the minister got two weeks vacation. While he was away our church was closed. Uncle Hermon, a constant church goer, would go up to the Baptist Church at the Center for those two Sundays. On the day of this story, when the minister gave out the hymn, Uncle Hermon put on his glasses, turned to the page, but did not sing. Some rogue had written at the top of the page:

"The race is not to the swift,
Nor the battle to the strong,
As the man said when
He hit the skunk over the head
With a brickbat."

One year our townspeople made up a very creditable troupe and played Gilbert and Sullivan's opera "Pinafore" in some of the neighboring towns. Cousin Willis drilled the music, of course, and played the part of

DEACON HERMON ABBOTT

Captain Corcoran. I well remember how brave he looked and how shocked some of our older people were that he should have to sing: "Why damn it! It's too bad!"

His sister Emily was a country schoolteacher. She was one of the best of the region, very thorough, and having a sharp tongue and strong arms, kept perfect discipline.

In those days public spirited people used to lengthen the possible school terms by giving free board to the teacher. So she would "board around," staying a month with one family, and a month with another, and so on. One family where Cousin Emily boarded referred so often to the eminent qualities of their ancestors that it got on her nerves. One day, when she was more than usually annoyed, she threw a wet blanket over the conversation by saying: "I had a great-great-uncle who was hung." There was a profound disapproving silence until she explained that his name was Nathan Hale, and that he was hung by the British as a spy, his last words being:

> "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

After that episode her hosts did not try so much to indicate the superiority of their family connections.

The Hale connection, to which Cousin Emily referred, came about in this manner. Grandfather Ezra Abbot married, October 6, 1799, Rebekah Hale, daughter of Lieut. Joseph Hale of Coventry, Conn. She rode up to her new home behind her husband on a pillion. I have often thought that was a very romantic honeymoon. For they rode together across the whole State of Massachusetts, in the glory of the au-

tumn colors of maples, oaks, birches and sumach. She would be very readily excused, no doubt, if sometimes she found it safer to clasp her arms rather tightly about her husband's waist, as they cantered along in that sweet old-time way.

It must have been a pleasure to her, later, that her little sister, Elizabeth, married Zebediah Abbott, the elder, in 1801, and came to live just a half mile up the road. This accounts for Zebediah, the younger, being Father's own cousin, not mainly because his name was Abbott, but because his mother's maiden name was Hale.

Though I never saw Uncle Ezra, I knew Aunt Sarah very well, and their daughter, Cousin Claudia, was my childhood heroine. Aunt Sarah was a young governess in Virginia when she captured the heart of the schoolmaster. She was little and vivacious, and keen as they ever come, with humor enough for two, while he was an Abbot with "infinite capacity for the *consideration* of a subject." I have an old daguerreotype taken just after their marriage. It says, as plainly as faces can talk, "Oh, my! Isn't she cute, and don't I love her?"

Their daughter, Claudia, married very young, and lost her husband only four months later. She was broken hearted, and seemed quite unable to rally from the blow. Aunt Sarah, at her wits end, brought her east to see the New England relatives, and entered her at the Conservatory of Music in Boston. Claudia had one of the grandest low contralto voices that my ears ever heard. She made rapid progress and was warmly praised at her appearance in an oratorio concert by Carl Zerrahn, for forty years the great leader of the Handel and Haydn Society. But Claudia sang old

Uncle Ezra Abbot and Aunt Sarah
At Their Marriage

songs, too. Her specialty was a sentimental old favorite of those days which began:

"Mrs. Lofty has her carriage.
None have I.
She has dapple grays to draw it.
None have I."

All this was before my time, but I used to hear my mother and Cousin Willis rave about that glorious voice of the young widow, till, as I said, she easily became my childhood's heroine.

Soon after Claudia's return to Minnesota, the continued kindness of a young man who boarded with them at length so touched her that, though not carried away as by her first love, she married him and lived very happily. Thus it happened that when I was about eight years old they came east together. Calling at our home, my mother persuaded Claudia to sit down at the melodeon and sing for us "Mrs. Lofty." It was all that my imagination had pictured! Then, too, her sweet grave manner, and the heavy coil of dark hair that my sisters said would reach below her waist, confirmed me completely in my heroine worship. In later years I saw Claudia often, but her voice had suffered from asthma, so that she gave up singing altogether. She always remained a dear cousin to me, sweetly grave of manner. She did not inherit the mercurial spirits of Aunt Sarah.

I heard from Aunt Sarah's lips some very revealing things about Uncle Ezra.

"My friends would say to me," she said, " 'How can you permit Mr. Abbot to keep his overshoes under the hat rack, right in plain sight from the front door?' "

"And what did you say to them?" said I.

"I said, Charles; 'Ladies, if it adds to my husband's comfort to keep his overshoes under the hat rack, he shall do so, even though you see them from the front door.'"

"Bravo!" said I.

"When I went east with Claudia," said Aunt Sarah, "I left a good woman to keep house for Ezra. So I felt quite easy in my mind about him. But when I got off the train on my return, there was no husband to meet me. I hired a cab and drove home, quite anxious about him. As we drove up to the gate, here came Ezra with his dressing gown on, and the broom in his hands. It appears that the good woman had left within a week of my departure, but he had not written about it to avoid worrying me. He said he had been getting on nicely.

When the day of my return came, he had intended to meet me at the train, but he had become so interested in his reading that he forgot it, till almost too late. Then he considered whether it was best to clean up a little, or to go to the train. He decided on cleaning up, and said he thought it looked pretty well now. I gave one glance. Then I went up stairs and put on my house gown, and set to work!"

Another time she said to me: "Charles, my minister told me that he cannot read the New York 'Outlook' now, for fear it might unsettle his faith."

"What did you say to him?" I asked.

"I said: 'Mr. Blank, I don't see how you can read the Bible without unsettling your faith!'"

I never met anyone that it was so much fun to talk with as with Aunt Sarah!

Uncle Joseph Hale Abbot died before I was a year old, so that I know him only by report. He was graduated from Bowdoin College with high standing. Almost his whole life was spent in or near Boston, in teaching in secondary schools. Though grave, and a little formal of manner, he was a great favorite with his pupils, who formed "Abbot Association" in his honor in some schools. He took much interest in science, and published some scientific papers. Aunt Fanny gave him a high encomium when she said: "Intellectual superiority and moral purity—those were the qualities I first required in my maiden ideal of a life-companion; and, looking for these in your father I was never disappointed."

Their son, General Henry Larcom Abbot, and grandson, General Frederick Vaughan Abbot, were both retired as Acting Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army. General H. L. Abbot had a varied and exceptionally distinguished career. His first service, performed amidst an Indian uprising, located the route of the Southern Pacific Railroad, from California into Oregon. Soon afterwards he was associated with the then Captain, later Major General, Humphreys, in the investigation of the flow and flood-control of the Mississippi River. Abbot performed most of the experimental work, and wrote most of the report. It is now a famous classic, and was originally printed as Professional Papers of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, No. 4, 1861. For this outstanding investigation he was elected a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Joining the Army of the Potomac, Abbot was seriously wounded at the first battle of Bull Run, but, recovering, served continuously 1862-1865. Rapidly promoted, he had command from 1864 of Siege Artillery of the armies operating against Richmond and Petersburg. He developed mortar fire, particularly, in this command. For 20 years after the War he commanded the Engineer School at Willet's Point, N. Y. This

was a period of active military research with him, especially relating to torpedoes and to the application of electricity in mining. He conducted the underwater blasting operations to improve the Hell Gate approach to New York Harbor. Here he made observations of the velocity of transmission of the waves of explosion which, even yet, are referred to by physicists.

After his retirement, General Abbot was engaged as consulting engineer by both the Old and the New French Panama Canal Companies. He made a prolonged study of the meteorology and river flow in the Canal Zone. It was his testimony and writings which had a deciding influence on inducing the United States to purchase the French properties. Again it was General Abbot's congressional testimony and many articles, in both popular and engineering magazines, which persuaded the Government to build the Canal as it is, rather that to attempt the so-called "sea-level canal." In short, if not father, General Abbot was the attending physician, without whom the Panama Canal would neither have been born nor lived. In his old age, at 84 years, General Abbot was appointed a member of a committee of the National Academy of Sciences, to investigate for Government the safety of the Canal, and particularly the slides along the Culebra Cut. He was as active as any member of the committee, spending sometimes ten hours a day clambering about the Cut, and verifying conclusions.

On the whole, there is no one of our race of Abbots who deserves so high a place in public estimation as General Henry Larcom Abbot.

In my early years, my father and mother used every year to take us children in the "carryall," pulled by "Johnny," our well-beloved Morgan horse, to make a

UNCLE JOSEPH HALE ABBOT

visit at my mother's old home. It was a jaunt of 25 miles, and took all day. Now, one drives it in less than one hour. We used to go in April, before spring farming began. The ground would be frozen in the morning and we would make good time over the six miles of back road to Milford. But beyond Milford there were miles of deep sand, and, towards the end of our journey, steep hills. So it would be a tired horse who pulled us into Uncle Alonzo's yard near supper time. The things that pleased me most on the trip were trotting through a covered bridge, and driving through several pools, beside the road, for Johnny to get drinks.

Grandmother was then alive, and I dimly remember cookies and barberry jelly received from a little old lady who had some idiosyncrasies of her own. My Cousin Fred was almost my own age. All my Abbot cousins were a generation older than I, because Father was one of the younger sons, and was 48 years old when he married. So I looked forward to being with Fred, and especially when he had a velocipede and later a high-wheel "Columbia" bicycle.

Besides Uncle Alonzo's family, there was Aunt Jane, my mother's younger sister, and her long-suffering husband, Uncle Orton. They had six children altogether, but all died early, only one reaching his sixth year. This had a profound effect on Aunt Jane. She never laughed, but might sometimes show a pucker in her forehead if Uncle Alonzo said something droll. She made poor Uncle Orton do everything she said. For lack of her children, she poured out all her nature into spotless housekeeping. The floor was scoured clean enough to eat from, and the stove shone like a mirror. If ever a speck of dust from the dusty Mam-

moth Road dared to enter her door, it was chased out instantly with a dust-broom.

Uncle Orton had been a Union soldier in the Civil War. About the year 1888 a notable G.A.R. encampment was held, not far from Lowell, which he wished to attend. Although he had not been away from home to spend the night for twenty years, Aunt Jane gave her consent. My sister Florence and I went down to stay with her. I was to do Uncle Orton's chores while he was away.

Uncle Orton met us at the station in Lowell, and drove us out six miles to their home. On the way he cautioned me that I must not drive in the street car track, lest I might wrench the wheels of the wagon when it was necessary to turn out. Aunt Jane met us at the door with a feather duster. That evening Uncle Orton showed me about tending to the cows and the hens. I should wear rubber boots, and a certain suit of overalls and jumper, to work in the barn. When I came into the shed, I was to take these off, and put on boots and clean overalls. If I went into the house, I should take off boots and wear slippers, and remove the overall. Having taught me these essentials, Uncle Orton left for the encampment.

Everything passed without incident. I was careful not to wrench the wagon wheels when I met Uncle Orton at Lowell. That evening we went down to Uncle Alonzo's for our visit there. We arrived just at supper time. Uncle Alonzo greeted us jovially: "Well, Charles! So you've been staying with Jane. Did she make you take your shoes off before she would let you in?"

"No," said I. "She met us with a feather duster, but let us keep our shoes."

"I wouldn't have believed it!" said Uncle Alonzo. "I thought if Jesus Christ came to see her she would make him take his shoes off before he came in."

"Why, Alonzo!" said sweet Aunt Mary. "How can you talk so?"

"You know, Mary, it's only the honest truth," said he.

That evening, Uncle Alonzo had an errand with a neighbor a mile or two away and he took my sister and me with him. We sat in the wagon while he was in the house. When he came out he took the reins, and drove off without a word, till we got to some distance. Then he said:

"That man wouldn't look natural without a pipe in his mouth."

He drove a little farther and added: "No. He wouldn't look natural in his coffin without a pipe in his mouth."

Then he grinned a little, and said: "If he was to be found in his coffin with a pipe in his mouth, everybody would declare I put it there."

Uncle Alonzo loved oratorio music. He played the organ in the little church for over forty years. For a great many years he organized the annual "Pelham Sing," more generally called "Greeley's Sing." It was held in August, when the farm work was a little slack. Uncle Alonzo would send word around to all the singers in the nearby towns. Some would come from so great a distance that he had to put them up at night. Often his house and his barn were both used by the guests to sleep in.

In the forenoon they had the "rehearsal" at the church. Then they adjourned to the town hall for a dinner, provided by the "Ladies Aid." After dinner all went back to the church. Generally Uncle Alonzo

would import a director, some soloists, and a few pieces of orchestra from Lowell. All the afternoon they would sing. There would be solos and choruses. Two choruses he always conducted himself: "Then Round About The Starry Throne" from Handel's "Samson," and "Hallelujah" from Handel's "Messiah."

I can see him now in memory's eye, tall and spare, with browned, deeply lined face, rapt with enthusiasm, his long black coat flapping with the vigor of his gestures, and the farmers and farmers' wives before him as earnest as himself. In each of these choruses there comes a long pause just before the final phrase. He had to have that pause just exactly right! Especially so in "Then Round About the Starry Throne." It ends:

> "And triumph over Death and Thee—
> [The long pause]
> And Thee, Oh Time!"

Uncle Alonzo never missed hearing "The Messiah" in Boston at Christmas, as long as he was able to go. I used to room with Clem Hamblett while I was attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He lived about half way from Lowell out to Uncle Alonzo's place, and he used to spend week ends at home.

One Monday, Hamblett told me: "Your Uncle drove by our house the other day. My father was washing the buggy. Your Uncle stopped to chat a little. As he picked up the reins to go he said: 'Are you going down to Boston to hear "The Messiah" this Christmas?'

"'I'd like to, Mr. Greeley,' said my father, 'but I don't see how I can get away.'

UNCLE ALONZO D. GREELEY

"Your Uncle clucked to the horse, and said: 'Better go! Better go! Brother Hamblett. Why, I'd rather miss the Resurrection than to miss that'!"

The first time my wife and I visited at Uncle Alonzo's, he carried us up to call on Aunt Jane. When we were sitting down, Uncle Alonzo reached back to his pocket, took out his handkerchief, and very carefully dusted off the seat of his chair. I saw puckers come in Aunt Jane's forehead, but she said nothing. Immediately after he had sat down, Uncle Alonzo started forward in his chair, and gazed painfully towards a spot upon the wall.

"Why Alonzo! What do you see?" ask Aunt Jane.

"Jane," said he. "Do you know, I think that picture hangs a thirty-second of an inch too low on the right hand corner!"

That time she came as near laughing as I ever saw her.

Uncle Alonzo and my wife were very congenial. They corresponded, occasionally, as long as he lived. His letters were quite as characteristic as his conversation. He seemed to think that I was afflicted with a case of early piety. So he used to suggest in his letters to her some Biblical posers for me. For instance, how did I reconcile it with the 'goodness of God that Jehovah slew 80,000 Jews just because David took a census?"

The last time I saw Uncle Alonzo he said: "Charles, I did something once that I suppose I could have been sent to jail for. I never told anybody about it till now.

"There was a woman near here that had a drinking husband. He would go on a drunken spree every week or two, and beat her shamefully. He would take her things too, and sell or pawn them for liquor. It got

so that she hadn't much left of the nice things she had when they were married.

"One night in hay-time she came up to our house, with her face all blotched with beating and crying. She told Father that her husband had stolen her wedding ring from her, and beaten her dreadfully, and gone off to Lowell to get more drink. She said she was afraid of what he might do to her when he came home.

"We had had a hard, long day, from before five o'clock in the morning till dark. We had left a load of hay on the wagon to pitch off the next morning. But I winked at the hired man, and we went out to the barn and threw off that load of hay. Then we went down to that woman's house with the team, and we took away every last thing she had left in the wagon. Then we gathered up her and her baby, and we drove all night to take her to her father's home, way up north in New Hampshire, and to get back for work again at sun-up the next morning."

When Uncle Alonzo carried us to the trolley at the Center that evening, he pointed with the whip as we went past the Cemetery. "Mary lives over there," he said. "I wish I was over there with her."

Before many months he was.