

The Old Hermit's Dream: a story by Minnie May Monks

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The old hermit came slowly up the steep rocky path near the lake leaning heavily on a hickory stick. He nodded to us as he sat down on a flat, smooth stone and braced his feet against a boulder below. Presently he reached out a thin brown hand and broke off a twig of sassafras and chewed the sweet-scented bark; then he gazed down over the lake a long time before he spoke. "I had a strange dream last night," he began at length. "A dream real as life! It seemed that I awakened from a long deep sleep to find myself in a world called "Solitude," but it was not a gloomy solitude. When I opened my eyes in the early dawn I heard leaves whispering softly above me, and somewhere below the ripple of water over a bed of stones. I smelled damp leaf mold, greenwood, and new buds. Gradually as my senses awakened and the world became lighter, the forest, about me sang with a thousand voices spring birds fluted, whistled, and chirped-wild turkeys clucked in the bushes nearby-squirrels swished through branches where wild grapevines festooned drooping limbs-so near, that I could reach it with out-stretched hand was a crystal drinking-bowl fed by a little spring-run. I was loathe to move for fear this sweet Elysian dream would come to an end, but finally curiosity got the best of me. I arose and walked out to the edge of a rocky ledge to behold a view clear, and far, and wide, Below me stretched a long wooded valley flanked by mountains, and down through the valley as far as the eye could reach, ran a swift wide stream. Spread out before me in all directions was a wilderness undisturbed throughout ages by man."

The old hermit paused, and with hand-shaded eyes peered into the forest of his dream.

"The mighty trunks of the trees in that great primeval forest were as if they had stood a thousand years! Big stately oaks, their rugged trunks and strong crooked branches stretching skyward; grand old pines, tall and majestic, made a shade like night-cedars, as beautiful as the cedars of Lebanon! Lofty sycamores towered above a forest of graceful hemlock. Splendid sugar maples neighbored with handsome black birches. Sturdy chestnut trees covered the mountainsides, and tall hickorys grew in the foothills about. Looking below, I saw a herd of red deer come down to the river-edge to drink. There was a crash behind me, and I turned to see a big black bear go lumbering down the slope. Slowly the sun rose over a long range of mountains to the east, and the forested valley at my feet was warm with sunlight striking through. Animals that love the sun came out on bare ledges to bask. A woodchuck lay sunning himself on a stone below me. Across a little gully on a flat grey rock lay a handsome spotted rattler and his mate. A great eagle winged his solitary flight across the valley; a vast company of wild pigeons passed high overhead—thousands of them darkened the air, and passed on like a cloud. The sun rose higher. As my eyes scanned the valley before me I saw two objects moving down along the river-edge, and as they came nearer I could see that they were two strong-limbed, brown-skinned Indians, dressed in breech-clouts; no other garment covered their nakedness. All afternoon I watched them make, and complete, a shelter near the water-edge. The sun set clear over the mountains in the west,

dusk came, and the night-birds-"Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!" echoed far and near. When darkness settled down on the earth I was aware of the night-folks of the forest. I heard the hungry howl of a wolf-pack far up, near the mountain-top. A wildcat prowled so near, that in the dark I could see the gleam of green fire in his eyes. A raccoon peered down upon me from a tall rock oak. Presently I smelled black birch burning, and I made my way slowly and cautiously down to the river-edge, where burning embers from a camp-fire threw a light into the deep shadows about and lighted the faces of two Indians squatting near it. The scented cedar and green birch smoke, and the crackle of the burning wood was good. I lay concealed in thick undergrowth with my body close to the ground, and there, I listened to the two redmen make their plans.

The Sassafras Place.

I gathered that they had just discovered this fertile valley and found it a rare hunting ground. They found much sassafras here which they would use to make a decoction, and they named the valley where they found it Wanak, "The Sassafras Place." They would plant maize here in the rich virgin soil. They would gather roots, and herbs, and barks, for the old medicine-man of their tribe. In the late summer and autumn they would gather river-grapes, wild plums and nuts. They would take fresh fish from the stream and smoke them. They would hunt game for winter food and clothing; then they would join their families at the big camp in Pompton, for the winter. Long I lay, and listened to their plans, and long the birch log kept its warmth and glowed in the night. Finally I crept back to the shelter of sassafras trees near the foot of the mountain slope, and soon I fell into a deep sleep, and while I slept, a century had passed away.

My eyes opened to the sun's last rays, shafts of golden light across the valley of my dream. The haze of autumn was on the hills about, and the good smell of autumn. Near me was a circle of stones such as Indians use to hold down the skins of their winter lodges, and not far away were two Indian burial mounds at the edge of a long meadow. I lay still, watching the shadows of night approach. I felt the sting of frost in the air and listened to stealthy sounds; then I heard the short high-pitched bark of a fox up the mountainside. A full moon came up and flooded the valley with silver, and the stars above me seemed close and bright.

Suddenly I was startled by the guttural tones of Indian voices, and turning slowly I saw through a screen of young sassafras trees a strange sight. Out from the mounds I had looked at a short time before, arose two stalwart Indians. One of them, tall and bronzed, was dressed in buckskins embroidered with porcupine quills stained in bright colors. The many eagle feathers in his war-bonnet proclaimed him a chief. The other Indian, a younger man, was dressed in buckskins, and had one eagle feather stuck in his long black hair. At the side of their burial mounds they stood and looked about. They spoke of this, "The Sassafras Place." the richness of this valley in the "long ago." They spoke of Winbeam, where they gathered chestnuts, and looked back of them at the steep mountain rising above them. They spoke of Macopin, their wild-potato place; of Pompton, their big camping ground; of Preakness Hill, where they shot the young buck deer; of Pequannock, the place made clear for cultivation. They spoke of Passaic, Totowa, and Ramapo. From their talk I gathered that the chief's name was Quewagmon; the younger Indian's

name was Winocksop. Presently they stopped talking, and reached down into the holes from which they had emerged and hauled out tomahawks, Indian hammers, bows and arrows, and a deerskin sack filled with herbs and leaves, Kinnikinnick, they called it. They drew forth their pipes. The younger redman's pipe had a long bone stem and the bowl was made of turtle-shell. The chief's pipe also had a long bone stem but the bowl was carved out of stone. On the bowl of each pipe was carved the figure of a wolf, the wolf facing the smoker. I gathered that the wolf was their totem sign; that they belonged to the Wolf tribe of the Minsies. They squatted down on their haunches and filled the bowls of their pipes with their sweet-scented Kinnikinnick; then they made a spark of fire on a cedar fire-block and silently smoked. When the fire in their pipes died out and only the fragrance of the scented leaves remained, they talked again, and I knew that they were not pleased with the changes in their old hunting grounds. The air was not so good as when they roamed this valley, hunting and fishing in the "long ago." They scanned the valley before them with piercing black eyes, and noted a clearing here and there, and several log cabins. "Ugh!" they grunted in sullen disgust. They refilled their pipes, and silently smoked again, inhaling the smoke through their nostrils.

Great Spirit Angry?

Suddenly, the peace and quiet of the night was rent with the clang, clang, clang of iron upon iron. Wham bang! Wham bang! From hill to hill the echoes sounded. The smell of burnt hoof and hot iron filled the air. The two Indians sat like wooden images; then threw their treasures back into their burial mound and prepared to follow; hesitated, and thought better of it. Up from the ground they bravely arose. Was the Great Spirit angry at them because they had come back from their happy hunting ground? They would find out if it was the Great Spirit who made those unearthly noises; or if it were only a trick of the palefaces. Silently they followed the curve of a wooded hill, and silently I followed. Against the foot of a low rocky hill where a little brook curved and hesitated before darting into a meadow, there nestled a weather-beaten blacksmith shop. I watched the Indians, from the darkness in back of them. They stood spellbound gazing on the strange scene before them. Through the wide-open door the smithy could be seen the coals glowing in the forge-fire. Near the forge was the figure of a tall gaunt keen faced Englishman, beating with a hammer upon an anvil. The anvil stood back a short distance from the forge to give the blacksmith room to swing his hammer. The bellows groaned and groaned again, as a tall lanky boy caught the bellows and heaved them up and down and blew the coals. A shower of sparks mounted upward and the light revealed a big roan horse standing patiently by the smithy door. The walls of the forge were blackened with smoke, and scraps of iron and broken horseshoes were strewn on the dirt floor. In one corner was a splintered axle, a smashed wheel, and an old ploughshare. The blacksmith, grimy with the blackness of smoke, stood watching the fire that was deep in the coals burning around the iron he had put into it, and shaped it upon the horn of the anvil. He lifted the horse's foot and put the iron against the hoof, searing it and measuring the foot. Nauseating, was the smell of burnt hoof. Then he stepped to the anvil and hammered off bits of iron. And again, the clang, clang, clang, of iron upon iron, followed by a hiss as the blacksmith dipped heated iron into a bucket of cold water. It was wham bang! "Stand still boy!" Wham bang! "Stand still, boy— whoa boy!" Wham bang! There was the melody of

labor; the sweat of labor; as the big blacksmith hammered iron and wiped the sweat from his brow. The tall lanky boy threw fresh chips into the forgefire, and plied the bellows with renewed vigor. Again a fountain of sparks flew upwards from the bellows. As light as day was the interior of the smithy, and the light reflected on horseshoes hung on the rafters overhead. The reddened glow lighted the faces of newcomers— the calm pleasant faces of two young Dutchmen. One held an ax in his hand, the other a broken whiffletree. With mighty muscles and a will to work, with clean fire, clean heat, the blacksmith tempered and hammered iron into shape, and the Indians silent, keen-eyed, stood watching. Long they stood and watched the white man swing his heavy hammer with slow and measured beat; then silently they stole away as silent as the bat that flew over their heads. Around the curve of the wooded hill and down to the head of the meadow to their burial mounds, and I followed close, to hide among the sassafras trees. "Ugh!" grunted Quewagmon. "Ugh!" answered Winocksop, and they jumped into their holes and covered themselves with earth.

Through the Autumn Haze

Drowsy and tired I lay among the sassafras trees to fall into a deep sleep. When I awoke, I rubbed my eyes and looked about. It was autumn, with the same blue haze hanging over the mountains and valley: the same good autumn smells; but what did I see! All the largest and finest of the great trees on the mountains and hillsides had been cut and a smaller growth had taken place. I heard the quick ringing strokes of an ax in the forest nearby. and saw the smoke coming out of a charcoal pit on the slope below me. The river I had seen in my first dream now ran through wide fields, and a big bridge spanned it. I counted three stone houses and several white farmhouses scattered here and there up and down the valley. I saw men bringing in their fall crops. Bewildered, I tried to gather my wits. I must go down to the fields and talk to the men. Before I realized the time, the day was done; then I got up to travel up the valley, for I could see a narrow road running the length of the valley. I scrambled down the bank, cut across a field of corn-stubble, crossed the bridge, and was almost out to the road that led up through the valley when I heard voices near an old fence corner.

"Ach; Gan't ve shake diz dust off, en git zoom goed fresh air, Hendrik," said one voice, and another voice wheezed out— "Ja, Johannes," and up from two sodded mounds, one on one side of the fence, and one on the other, arose two old Dutchmen. They were both square and stocky in build, and had round good-natured faces. Each carried in his hand a long Dutch pipe and a pouch stuffed full of tobacco. The pipe held by Johannes was a long, odd-shaped porcelain pipe with an ornate stem. Hendrik's pipe was also porcelain, with a huge bowl painted in brilliant colors. Johannes chuckled as he pulled out his tinder-box, rubbed steel against flint till they sparked, and lighted his pipe with a bit of tinder.

"Ach! Vhat you dink! I take mine pipe at mid-nacht de nacht before they bury me, en a pouch full auf mine own home-grown tobacco. Sez I, as I lay dere thinkin in mine narrow pine box— I

need not take much mit me to mine grave, only de good clothes I was buried in. I take mine vader's old pipe."

Hendrik chuckled. "Johannes," he said, "I do de same, and I mos' got caught. I slide back in mine box when mine son Dirk came in de rom, and de nex' day at de funeral I hear Joris, mine eldest son say as he bend o'er me. "Pop's clothing do smell of tobacco. Why did thee not air 'em, Tryntje?"

The two old neighbors chuckled softly, and drew slowly and tranquilly on their beloved pipes; then they shook their heads and looked solemnly up and down the valley.

I stood meditating on these two old-timers, and the changes around here, till a screech owl began to call— a bit spooky down here by these family burial plots along the old line fence. I reckoned I'd walk on up the road a bit. Some good valley farms these! Must have worked like blazes, the old Dutch settlers, to clear the valley of forest trees and make these farms. I walked on up the road a mile or two till I came to a little deserted cemetery on a knoll— the mounds all weed-grown and the frost wrenched slabs leaning drunkenly to one side. I was hurrying by when I glanced up into a tree overhead and saw a great owl huddled on a limb and suddenly his voice boomed out— "Whoo-hoo-hoo, hoo, whoo, whoo!"

"Who!" echoed a deep man voice not ten feet from the spot where I walked. I quickly jumped behind a big oak tree, for it was full moon. and light as day. "Can't a man crawl out of his hole once in a century, without being asked who!" shouted the big man voice, and a giant in height and broad of shoulder jumped out of a mound at the foot of a brown stone slab. He stood looking down into an empty hole by the side of the hole he had just come out of, when another tall form appeared and clapped him on the shoulder.

"A good many changes, John," said the new-comer. "I've been looking over the valley down to where the old grist-mill used to stand."

John swung around and slapped the other one on the back. "By Gemini! William," he said "I'm mighty glad to see you! I just stood looking down into your hole wondering what had become of you."

Spooks again! My skin felt all goose-flesh, and cold chills ran up and down my spine. Wasn't I ever a-going to get away from spooks tonight! But then I considered, these two, didn't look any more like spooks than the two good-natured Dutch spooks I'd just been listening to.

Good Natured Spooks.

"Tell me about the changes down the valley, William," said John, as he sat down with his back against a sandstone slab and stretched his long legs out in front of him.

Everything changed but the sounds," answered William. "That dunghill rooster crowing, and hounds trying to outbay the other on the Board place, and the cowbells up in the hills, sound natural as life, but there's nothing else natural hereabouts. I bet the old Dutchmen down the lower end of the valley don't rest any too easy in their graves with all these changes. The road runs on the other side of the gully now. I used to get bogged hub-deep, in the old road. Remember the night old Hank got tight, and lost his keg of apple-jack down the gully? The gully is filled in now. Good change, the new road— whole country is changed. I heard two gravediggers talking about a Civil war we had in this country a few years back. Said It was worse than the Revolution."

"William, what do you say to a smoke?" said John. "As long as we've settled down for a good visit together, we might as well smoke," and John pulled out his tinder-box and a handsome Meerschaum pipe. The bowl was a rich brown and the stem had an amber mouthpiece. He pulled a pig-skin pouch filled with tobacco from another pocket. "My little grandson Peter put this pipe and tobacco and tinder-box in my con with me only an hour before I was buried. The little lad came tiptoein' into the dark room and up to me; raised my best coat, and laid my smoke inside. "There grandpop." he said softly, I thought you wouldn't like to be buried away in your Sunday clothes and not have your smoke with you.' Nicest little shaver that ever lived, that boy," said John proudly.

William drew forth a pouchful of tobacco and an old briarwood pipe.

"This old hand-carved pipe was handed down to me from my folks in the old country," he said, as he patted it affectionately. "I told my son Jim that when I died he must bury this pipe and a bag full of tobacco with me, and the boy kept his promise. Jim, and all my boys were good boys."

"Mine too." said John, as he pressed the tobacco down in his pipe with a long forefinger. "That's something worthwhile to bring sons into the world, and see them and their sons grow up into strong able men."

"Shucks!" rumbled a deep bass voice from under the sod. "What's the use of being a begetter, if sons of our grandsons don't amount to a hill of beans. I came into these mountains, a young man glorying in my manhood, a man as strong as iron, with iron muscles, iron nerves, iron constitution; a man proud of my freedom in a new land. I came here to find iron. I discovered iron, I dug iron. I smelted iron. I knew the taste of iron, the weight of iron. I knew the feel of damp under the earth-crust. I worked to the boom of blasting rocks, to the sounding blow of pick and shovel. I worked and lived. Lived to see the big Hasenclever come with his workers to sink deep shafts; to catacomb a mountain with dark chambers; to build furnace and forge. I lived to see Robert Erskine, ironmaster of the Ringwood mines. I lived the long life of an iron man and begat sons of iron strength— men like me, who dug iron; and by the great White Apostle! I lie

here under the wild sod awaiting resurrection, and learn that a son of one of my grandsons digs his living with a pen!"

There was a loud snort; then silence under the sod.

"That must be one of the three miners that the Indians brought up here to find iron ore," said John.

"Yes," grunted William, as he lit his pipe and puffed with great satisfaction.

"Hearing you speak about the new Civil war," said John, "reminds me of my young days when I fought in the French and Indian war. I was one of the Louisbourg Grenadiers that fought under General Wolfe in the Battle of Quebec in 1759. Every man in the front ranks was six feet tall or more," and old John stood up and drew himself up to his full height. "We climbed the narrow steep footpath which was ever after called 'Wolfe's path to glory and to the grave.' Up to the Plains of Abraham, a mile from Quebec, we climbed. We went into that battle to win. We won the battle, and lost our commander. I saw General Wolfe fall, and saw him carried off the battlefield. I hope my grandchildren will take care of the red plume I wore in my hat. I was captain of the Grenadiers and mighty proud of that plume."

Ringwood Forges.

"Speaking about Wars," said William, "reminds me of my part in the Revolution. I was nigh unto fifty years old then, but nary a one of the young ones could beat me working or fighting. At the Ringwood forges I helped make cannon-balls and some of the links of the shore anchoring chain that was laid across the river at West Point. I was first lieutenant in the Sterling Military company under command of Colonel John Hathorne in 1778; I fought in the Battle of Minnisink in 1779. Colonel Hathorne's regiment and several other regiments pursued the Indians close to the Delaware river where we hoped to surprise them. Instead of us surprising them, they surprised us! We heard Brant give a war whoop, and the Indians rushed upon us from every side. We got short of ammunition, and gradually we were hemmed in to an acre of land: Still we kept the Indians at bay until sundown. When our ammunition was gone, we attempted to retreat. The fierce savages, fiercer for our long resistance, fought us with tomahawks. Only thirty men out of 150 escaped-only two of Colonel Hathorne's company escaped, and I was one of them."

"Say, you two are regular old ripsnorters, when it comes to braggin' about the battles you fought in. Now if you'd fought in the battle of the Wilderness, down in Virginia, you'd have somethin' to shout about!"

The two spooks, John and William, started up in amazement, and I did too, for if there wasn't another spook pulling up out of his diggings. He was a young curly-headed chap wrapped about with a big American flag.

"I see you're smokin' your pipes," he said. "Guess I'll have a smoke too," and he pulled a corncob pipe, a box of matches, and a package of tobacco out of his trousers pocket. He struck a match on the heel of his boot and lit his pipe.

John's and William's eyes almost popped out of their heads when they saw that. Matches came after their time.

"I'll tell you how I come to have my pipe with me," said the young man. "I was killed in action, and they burl'd me just as I fell, and wrapped me in our good old American flag. My old cob-pipe was in the pocket of my britches, along with this package of good Kentucky tobacco, and a box of matches. When my people dug me up from Virginia soil and brought me home they didn't disturb my body, and I was glad of it. I'm fond of my old cob-pipe," and he hung the flag back from his shoulders and hitched up his suspenders with a sigh of content.

"Young man," said John, "did you fight in that war called the Civil war?"

The young man nodded.

"Well, tell us about it!" urged John.

"Want to hear about it?" asked the young man carelessly. "Well, the North and the South had a little difference of opinion about some things, and they got mad and started to fight, and kept on fightin' longer than they had expected to. Old story now, but say it was some fightin' while it was on. I was killed in the battle of the Wilderness, on May 5, 1864. If you don't believe me, come over and look at my tombstone! I helped build the pontoon bridges we crossed the Rapidan river on. The battle took place down in the wilderness region south of the Rapidan, not far from the Old Wilderness Tavern. It was a crazy fool place to have a battle; a danse [*sic*] forest— couldn't see a hundred paces in any direction. The woods took fire in some places and many of our wounded perished in the flames and smoke. We had a big loss of men, somewhere in the neighborhood of eighteen thousand. Some hot fightin' boys! I guess you're Battle of Quebec, or Battle of Minisink, couldn't touch that! I was one of the eighteen thousand killed, and I know somethin' about it— Yes sir-ee!"

The older men looked at him curiously. Suddenly there was an unearthly shriek down the road, growing louder and louder, and nearer and nearer. A monster was coming straight toward the old cemetery, and there was a great ball of fire in its head. "B' jiminey! The devil coming hellbent, William," choked John, and he made a dive for his hole, closely followed by William.

A Shrieking Monster.

There was a burst of uproarious laughter, and the two older spooks peeked up over the edge of their holes to see the young spook slapping his sides and wiping away tears of merriment with the corner of his flag. The shrieking monster with a one-eye ball of fire in its forehead was

opposite the cemetery now, and passed by and on up the road making more noise than a hundred wildcats. William and John crept cautiously up over the edge of their holes as the shrieks grew fainter and fainter up the road, and watched the young man roll from side to side, then John snorted— "Drat your hide! If you know anything about that devil speeding up the road, tell us!"

Finally the young man sobered down enough to gasp— "That was an engine on the Greenwood Lake branch of the Erie. You two old mossbacks had better go back to sleep another hundred years, and then you'll see the devil comin' after you with wings!"

"William, I guess he's right," said John. "We're a hundred years behind the times. We don't like things as they are. We don't belong here anymore. We've had our day," and sadly the two old men slipped back into their holes.

The younger man shrugged his shoulders, and wrapped his flag tightly about himself again. "Guess I'll turn in too— didn't live out half my days on this old earth, but I'm behind the times just the same. Guess I'll go back and rest— quiet peaceful spot— this! Don't have to worry about work or war or nothin'— Might be a lot worse off," and he slipped down into his hole and out of sight.

I felt a mite lonely after the spooks disappeared. —Never had an idea that spooks could be such good company till this night. I stole away quietly and walked back down the long valley road; crossed the valley, and found my way to my old place among the sassafras trees.

I had no more than laid, when I was sound asleep, and by heck! I didn't sleep a good part of another century away, and when I awakened, this lake was here! The old Sassafras Place was covered with water, and I found myself living in the present day. How I escaped from being drowned, I don't know. If I had rolled in my sleep, I'd have rolled straight into this lake, and this little corner of sassafras trees is all that's left of all the sassafras trees that grew here in the "Long Ago." I lay still, thinking of all the changes I had seen in this valley, from a beautiful wooded solitude to rich cleared acres where many generations of white men lived; and now a lake sparkling in the sunlight. Then I got to thinking about the interesting spooks I had seen and heard, who used to live in these parts, and I hankerred to see more of them. Maybe some of them would express their opinion about what they thought of the changes now. I was curious to hear what they would say about it, so I lay still till night time. It would be a clear moonlight night, and I'd visit the village cemetery. After the guards that guard this lake had gone, I slipped over to the road, across the viaduct, and down the village road to the cemetery. Well, I didn't have long to wait. I was hiding my body down back of a tall marble slab, when two old fellows came crawling out of their graves for a breathing spell, I recognized their voices and peeked around the corner of the slab. Sure enough, there they were, two old-timers, who were old when I was young.

Neighbors in Cemetery.

"We were good cronies when we lived, George. I like to think we're neighbors in the cemetery."

"Hah— yes, Silas," said George. "As long as I had to be buried in a cemetery, I'm glad I'm near you, but I wanted to be buried up on the old farm. I don't like having my body in a cemetery along a public highway. I'd like to rest in my old apple orchard."

"They've made your monument exactly like mine, and within ten yards of it," said Silas, consolingly.

"Have a smoke, George"

"Hah-yes, I guess I will," said George, and he felt in his Sunday clothes for his pipe and tobacco, and looked disappointed when he felt empty pockets. Silas handed him a brand new clay pipe filled with tobacco, and smiled at the joy on George's face.

"Where did you get it?" asked George, as he lighted a match on the leg of his Sunday pants.

"Two young men stopped here by the roadside one day," said Silas. "They got out of a new-fangled coach that goes without horses. 'Au-to-mo-bile,' they called it! And they set down here on the grass to smoke. The tobacco smelled uncommon good. I gathered from their conversation that they were going to a stag party, and one of them pulled out a big box full of tobacco and new pipes. It seems that they were to furnish the smokes. Well, it sounded good to me, and smelled better, and when they got up to go over that hill yonder to see what a coon-dog was barking at, I just steps out of my hole a minute and helps myself to two new clay pipes. a package of tobacco, and a box of matches, and I thought what a good smoke you and I'd have some moonlight night out here in the cemetery while the rest of the world slept."

"I always liked a clay pipe better than any other kind," said George, as he drew and puffed slowly and meditatively. "Put an old clay pipe in a hot fire and it will come out as white and clean as a new one."

"Seen the new reservoir, George?" asked Silas.

"Well," said Silas, "let's walk up the road and see what they've been doing," and the two old cronies started off slowly, every once in a while stopping to shake a leg to get the stiffness out of their joints.

When they made a turn in the new road and came to the viaduct half a mile above the place where the old iron bridge used to span the Wanaque river, they stopped and looked up and down the new reservoir.

"Hah! They've wiped out everything slick and clean!" snorted George. "All the way up to the old Schermerhorn place and Wheeler dam— the old Board homestead gone— Squire Brown's property— the whole of Erskine— the Caywood, Stone, and brother Peter's farms, all under

water." He turned to look over the lower reservoir. "Same down yonder— about there," and he pointed straight ahead, "was the iron bridge and Zeliff's old bean field, Jenkin's farm, and the Old Furnace; down in the Hook, the Van Dine, the Ryerson, and Lyon farms— all drowned in this danged lake!"

The Unseen Voice

He stopped ranting, and cocked his ear to listen. Silas peered into dark corners. I stood hidden at the near end of the viaduct, and I looked skeerily about. An unseen voice chanted in clear distinct tones:

"You lie here a long graceful body, Man-made lake!
With steep mountain-walls shading and sheltering you.
At your feet reaches a great dam from hill to hill;
At your head, the door of a sleepy hamlet stirs half awake.
Your long arms reach out far to the north, the east, and the west—
Yes, even your very finger-tips reach out to grasp
Living waters to feed your long sinuous body.
You call to the clear swift trout brooks and they respond;
Little spring-runs come trickling down from high in the mountains,
From cold crystal cups of water under rocky ledges.
In meadows where little streams are born, they hear your call—
And they thread their way softly down through the meadow-grasses.
Yes, the life-giving streams of water flow one by one—
Come pouring into the heart of you!"

"Come, George," said Silas, as he looked up to see the frown on his old crony's face, "Let's visit your farm back of Winbeam. 'Tisn't likely they've changed that!" And they walked on up the road, looking wistfully over to where water covered the old home road.

George, eager to see his home farm, forgot his old stiffened joints. and swung along at a lively gait till he came to the last bend in the road; then he stopped suddenly Where once lay wide sunny hayfields with a long green hill beyond now lay a lake, and the sunny hill farm beyond was planted with evergreens.

"Silas! They've flooded my ten-acre meadow!" said George; then he choked and was silent.

Silas' face expressed sympathy. He knew how dear to the heart of his old friend were the home-acres handed down from generation to generation— that it had been George's fondest hope that the old farm should continue in his family for generations to come. Now his most cherished hope was dead.

Slowly the two silent old men were aroused. Far off to the southeast, sounded a noise such as they had never heard before. It was coming nearer— coming nearer— fast! Now it sounded up in

the sky directly overhead, and they both looked up to behold a great dark object sailing swiftly, smoothly, and steadily, high in the sky.

"What's that?" said George. "Do you think the world is coming to an end, Silas?"

"No." said Silas slowly. "I reckon that's what I heard a man talking about last time I was out. He called it an 'Air-o-plane. Said all the people would be traveling that way not far in the future."

"Hah," said George, as he started off down the road. "If I lived a thousand years, I'd travel about with an old horse and buggy! Who was the man you heard talking such foolishness?"

"He called himself a World war veteran," said Silas. "Do you suppose there has been another war, George?"

"Hah! I wouldn't be surprised at world war, or anything," said George, as he looked gloomily about. "Let's go back to the cemetery, Silas."

The old hermit absently broke off another twig of sassafras, "And the last I saw of the two old cronies," he continued, "they were standing by the viaduct, watching the silver light of the moon reflected on the waters of the lake."

The old hermit did not speak again. He sat as one in a trance, gazing into the scenes of the past, and we left him so, to follow a little path up the mountainside.