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A VISIT TO THE OLD HOUSE.

I had not revisited the home of my boyhood for forty years. It was moonlight, when I alighted from the stage-coach, within sight of the house in which I was born; and though I had determined to postpone my visit until the next day, there were some distant glimpses of towering elms and piles of building, which brought a world of recollections back upon me, and sent me to bed to dream all night of broken scenes from my boyish history. Ah! how deep are those impressions which are made in the child's soul while he is thinking only of his present sports and passing troubles!

Business of a more common-place and sordid character occupied me, among papers and receipt-books, till noon. I then prepared myself for a solitary visit to the home of my fathers; and I chose to approach it by the rear. Between the old garden and the river was a meadow. I had rolled in it, among the dandelions and buttercups, a thousand times: but the old nurse, who had been to me a mother, was long since dead. The cool clear spring was in the place where I left it; and the rill which wandered from it into the river was marked by an edging of greener grass. The fragrant mint along its borders came to my sense with associations of

good for nothing, I determined to come back in the next boat, a good deal disappointed in my expectations, but still pleased that I had seen so much of the world and human nature.

A. S. A.

OLD COMMENCEMENT.

The last Wednesday of September! What a crowd of old associations does the very sound awaken! Some of them too are such as no Board of Trustees or Faculty can transfer at pleasure to another page of the almanac. June is a sweet month, but its sweetness is that of summer, not of autumn. And is not the whole spirit of commencement day autumnal? The old puzzle—what does it commence?—is full of meaning. There is deep philosophy and solemn truth in that apparent contradiction, that old confusion of the end and the beginning. Do not break the illusion by referring the unlearned to the academic mazes of England, and mystifying them about “commencing bachelors” and all that. Let the enigma still remain unsolved to those who do not understand it. Let them attach wrong but wholesome meanings to the well known but mysterious phrase. Why should they not imagine that it speaks of active life, with its exciting hopes and fears, as just commencing—to the heart of the young graduate? When he returns to take his next degree, he may look back and see another meaning in it—the commencement of his struggles and temptations. Later still, he may be forced, against his will, to trace back irremediable sorrows—nay, inexpiable crimes—to that commencement.

But I am growing sentimental on the subject of Commencement Day in general, when my purpose was to speak of Old Commencement in particular. In turning over lately a huge volume of State Trials, I was unexpectedly attracted

by the famous case of Elizabeth Canning, which moved all London above a hundred years ago. This girl, to account for a month's absence from her friends, pretended to have been detained by force, in a house which she designated not far from London, by a family of gypsies. She procured their conviction, but was afterwards herself accused of perjury. The gypsies clearly proved an alibi, but in so doing, it was necessary to determine dates with the most extreme minuteness and precision. This, which would in any case have been perplexing, where the truth was to be gathered from a multitude of rustic witnesses, became a task of ten-fold difficulty from the recent introduction of the New Style, and the fact that the occurrences in question all took place about the Christmas holidays. This made it necessary to inquire whether "Christmas," in the mouths of these uneducated witnesses, denoted "Old" or "New Christmas," as they simply and expressively distinguished them.

The reading of this trial very forcibly recalled to mind the fact, well known to those familiar with the history of Nassau Hall, that its Commencement, from the time of its foundation, was a kind of fixed point in the rural calendar of the surrounding country, where the processes of husbandry, and even more important things, are said to have been talked of and remembered by their chronological relation to "Commencement." The facility with which periodical associations soon grow fixed, especially when they begin to have a hereditary hold on those who have been born and bred along with them, is well known as a general fact, and well exemplified by this case in particular. Their strength and tenacity were none the less because the origin and meaning of the name "Commencement" were veiled in mystery. As the streets of the borough were annually thronged with "country cousins," who took no further notice of its public institutions, than by strolling through the grounds and buildings, so the right of "Commencement" to a place in the calendar was stoutly maintained by some who had scarcely even heard of

the "College of New Jersey." And I doubt not that in some very worthy but secluded and uneducated families, there is not even sorrow for the change of style, but a continued reference to all home and neighbourhood events to the time-honoured era of the "Old Commencement."

ROCKY HILL, Sept. 25, 1850.

A. M.

NEW BOOKS.

[From the Newark Daily Advertiser of the 16th of September, 1850 :

WHEN WERE THE UNITED STATES FIRST DECLARED FREE AND INDEPENDENT ?

The last number of the Princeton Magazine contains a notice of Christopher Marshall's Diary, recently published in Philadelphia, in which occurs the following passage :

"There is one entry in the diary which certainly requires explanation. While the entry on the fourth of July, 1776, contains a minute account of many current events, not the slightest allusion is made to the fact that Independence was that day declared, but in the entry of July 2d, Mr. Marshall says, '*This day*, the Continental Congress declared the United States Free and Independent States.'"

A reference to the Journals of Congress would readily have furnished the explanation desired, and as others may feel interested in the subject, or not be aware of the course pursued by the Continental Congress, in perfecting the Declaration of Independence, the following brief narration is compiled from the Journals, and other sources.

The resolution declaring the Colonies independent, was introduced by Richard Lee of Virginia, and seconded by John Adams, of Massachusetts, on Friday the 7th of June, 1776. It was as follows :

"That the United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states, that they are absolved from all