

Among the Litchfield Hills

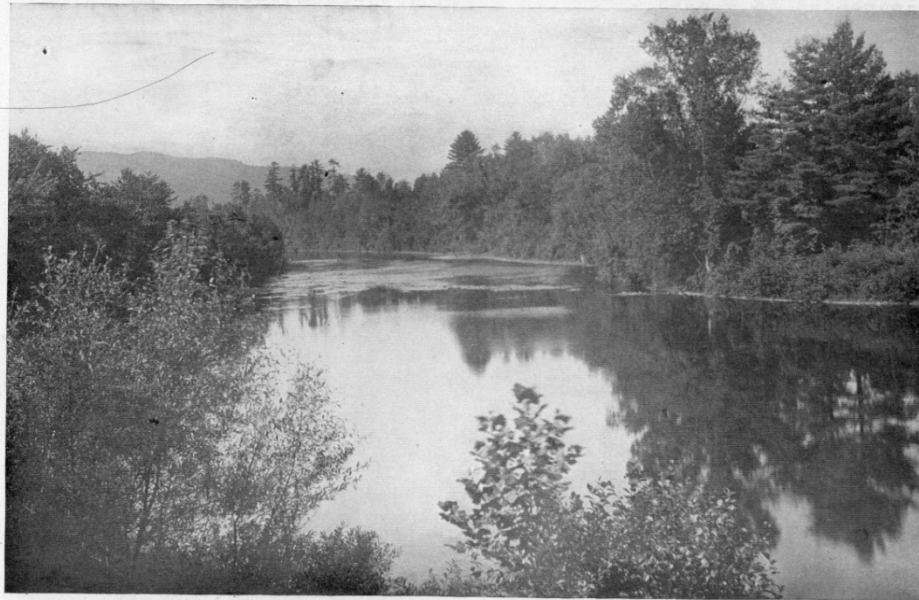
Note from the publisher

We at Between the Lakes Group are happy to make this article from Volume 4 of the *Connecticut Quarterly* available to you. We anticipate adding more material like this to the free material we are pleased to offer. Even though the article is short, we have added an index – as much to facilitate finding it on the world wide web as to use in actual perusal of the article.

We are in the process of publishing more historical information about Connecticut, and specifically about the Litchfield Hills. As the #1 publisher of historical material about Litchfield County, we invite you to examine both our free material and our CD-ROMs – the sale of which make it possible to offer free material.

A comprehensive of our [Litchfield County offerings](http://www.betweenthelakes.com) can be found at our main website, <http://www.betweenthelakes.com>. We invite you to visit us there, with special attention to our material on this area.

Meanwhile, this article provides a geographic overview of much of Litchfield County. We hope you enjoy it.



ON THE HOUSATONIC.



AMONG THE LITCHFIELD HILLS.

BY EDGAR DEANE.

At the advice of his physician, who charged only two dollars for telling him, Uncle William was induced to take a short rest from his arduous duties. His consultation with Cousin Jim resulted in their deciding to take a driving trip down the *Housatonic Valley from Canaan. They were to drive as they pleased, with no particular point for destination, and get back when they chose.

Arriving in Canaan rather too late in the afternoon to start the same day down the valley, Uncle William, who had brought his camera, started out to cultivate his artistic eye. His operations were not complete, of course, without "Let's see the picture, mister," from the omnipresent small boy, whom a

*As to the meaning of Housatonic, in his book, "Indian Names in Connecticut," Dr. Trumbull says, "Eunice Mahwee (or Mauwehu), the last full-blooded survivor of the Scaticook band, in 1859, pronounced the name '*Hous'atenuc*,' and interpreted it 'over the mountain.' The tradition received by the Scaticook Indians of the discovery of the river and valley by those who came over the mountain from the west, establishes this interpretation beyond a doubt." It is also interpreted "River of the Mountains."

companion soon accosted with, "Say, Sammy, yer mother wants yer ; you'll ketch it when you git home." This cheerful announcement abated Sammy's ardor in the investigating line, and he hurriedly departed for that place unlike any other. The explanations which would have been necessary to enlarge Sammy's knowledge of photography reminded them of the experience of a dealer in photographic supplies. A purchaser complained of the plates he bought. "Did you follow directions?" asked the dealer. "Oh, yes, very carefully. I loaded the holders, exposed the plates, took them in the dark room



VIEW IN CANAAN.

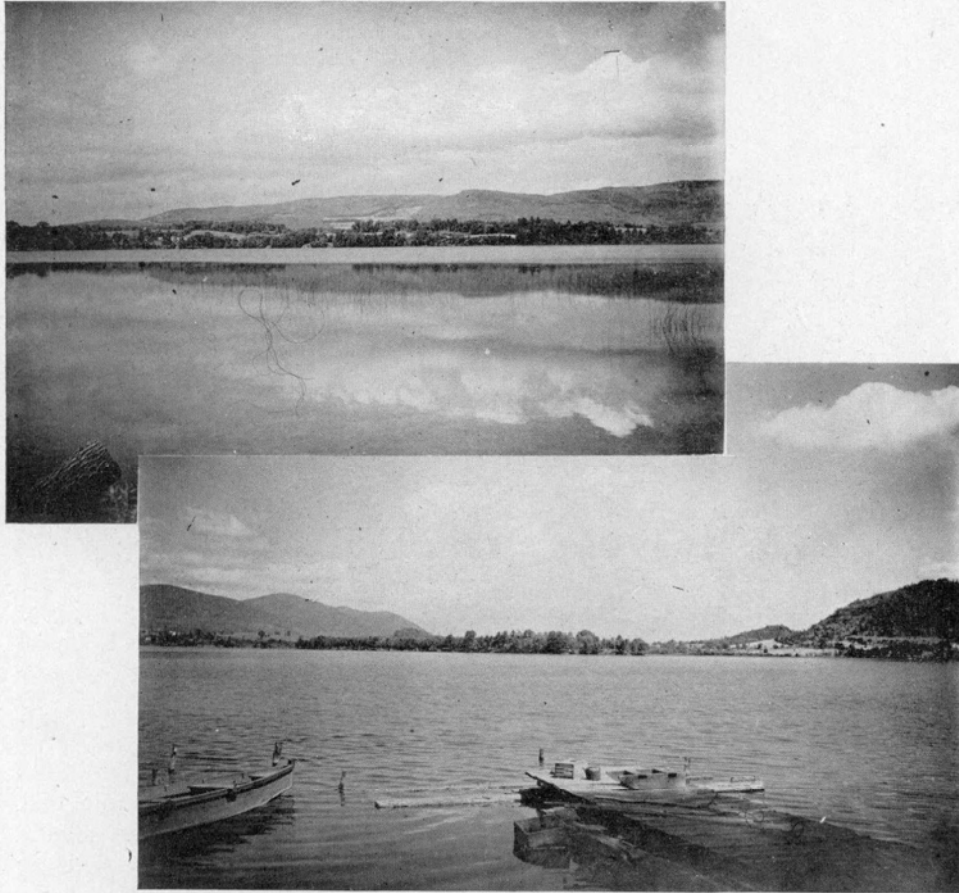
and looked at them, but not a trace of a picture could I find." "Did you develop them?" "Develop! what's that?" asked he, in utter amazement. This customer must have been related to the young man who bought a printing frame at a store and took it back two days later, mad as the proverbial "wet hen." He gave them to understand that he had bought and paid for a good printing frame and they couldn't push off any second-hand goods on him. They said they were very sorry, they supposed the frame was all right and would do anything they could to rectify a mistake. "Well," said he, pointing to the dial on the back of the frame, used for registering the number of prints, "I had a print in that frame *all day* yesterday, and that pointer never stirred."

As Sammy could not see the picture, neither could Uncle William, and this was the beginning of a series he was taking on faith, the results to be found

after his return home, where in the seclusion of his private apartments, "he'd do the rest."

Early the next morning the journey was begun, they starting for Falls Village by the way of Twin Lakes, and from thence to Lime Rock and Sharon, where they stopped for the night.

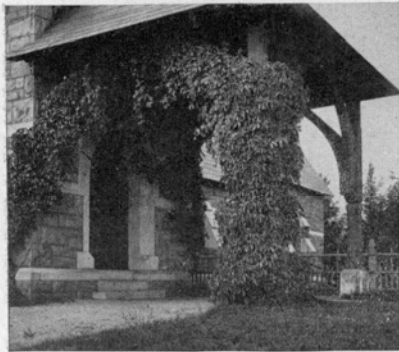
It has been said that one takes away from a place only what he brings to it. In a certain sense this may be true. One has to have the ability to appreciate what he sees, in order to absorb it. Aside from that he may learn many



TWIN LAKES.

things and gain much knowledge and pleasure from traversing a country new to him, although he will realize what he misses, because it *is* new to him. The wealth of reminiscence which an inhabitant of the region can impart, the historical detail familiar to the student of that section, the abodes or sometime homes, of well-known people,—all these the traveler likes to know about and feels his loss if the knowledge is lacking. The exception to this is when he goes to a cemetery and finds out what a number of saintly people formerly lived in that region. Let the tombstones tell their own story, and have no wily native

imagination which always accompanies religious zeal, and lights up whatever is distant with rays of hope and promises of future glory ; a sublime trust in God, who made the winds that howled and the snows that drifted over the wintry waste, to be ministers of His wrath and the servants of His will ; these are some of the motives which led to the settlements of the forbidding hill-tops where the oak battled with the elements, and of the more inviting interval



CHURCH PORTICO, LIME ROCK.

where the pine and hemlock sighed amid the tall grass of the hunting-ground. The elasticity of a ball is to be estimated by the length and number of its rebounds. This is true of emigration. The toughness of fiber, the wiry strength of the adventurer's nerves, is best known by the number of removes that he made, and their distance from the secure abodes of his fellow men. Hence you will find that the settlers of Litchfield were from the first, *picked men*. The love of luxury and ease was almost unknown to them. They built their houses on the hills of Goshen, Litch-

field, Winchester, Torrington, Watertown and Bethlehem, and made their roads to them from the valleys with a defiance of comfort and civil engineering shocking to the nerves of their descendants."

The last statement, anyone who has driven in that region can readily appreciate, for it seems as though the roads were built over the steepest hills that could be found. As another writer, in commenting on the same subject, has said : "Roads were laid out of a liberal-width, usually six rods, but in other respects the layout fails to command our respect. To get to the top of the highest hill by the shortest route, and thence to the top of the next, seems to have been the chief object in view, and though many of these old roads have been discarded, yet the traveler, if he has any taste for engineering, still has the opportunity to exercise his propensity."

The pleasant summer morning in a region abounding with enchanting views was thoroughly enjoyed by Uncle William and Cousin Jim, as they journeyed by the Twin Lakes, Washinee and Washining, and thence to that grandest natural phenomenon in the valley, Canaan Falls.

In the afternoon a pleasant time was had at the Barnum, Richardson Co's works at Lime Rock, where the superintendent entertained them by showing them about the shops. A new tire-setting machine interested Uncle William by its wonderful efficiency. To anyone in need of such a machine he would unhesitatingly say, "Look into the merits of this one."

As the stranger drives through the beautiful streets of Sharon, his mind most naturally turns to the biblical phrase, "The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley," and he thinks that surely those who christened the place must have had that saying in mind. It certainly is one of the most attractive towns in all New England. The extra broad, well-shaded street, or double street, for it is a regular boulevard, with nicely-kept lawns on both sides, extending through the center of the town, and the charming residences, are revelations to the traveler who comes upon it for the first time, having known nothing

about it and expecting to find in this far corner of the state, remote from railroads, a primitive country village. It has an air of originality about it, too, that gives it a character all its own. This is evidenced more especially by its soldiers' monument, a huge stone cannon, with the inscriptions on its pedestal, so different from the conventional type of soldiers' memorials elsewhere seen, and by the stone clock-tower in the center of the town, which musically chimes the hours.

From Sharon over the mountain to West Cornwall and on to Kent was but a day's journey, allowing Uncle William ample time to photograph what took his fancy.

The township of Cornwall, though composed of much good farming land, and especially land adapted to the turning out of dairy products, is quite hilly and mountainous.

The Hon. T. S. Gold, in his "History of Cornwall," says: "The rocky surface of Cornwall gave large indications to the early settlers of mineral wealth, and the township was named after the rich mining region in the old country." Furthermore, the same author remarks: "When the question of a county seat was early agitated, and Cornwall put in her claim for the honor, 'Yes,' it was said, 'go to Cornwall and you will have no need of a jail, for whoever gets in can never get out again.'



CLOCK TOWER, SHARON.

"The old divine who, passing through Cornwall, delivered himself of the following couplet, gave more truth with his poetry than is considered essential:

'The Almighty, from His boundless store,
Piled rocks on rocks, and did no more.'

"Another authority attributes it to Dr. Dwight, president of Yale College, who came up to look at the college lands, and thus expressed himself :

'The God of Nature, from His boundless store,
Threw Cornwall into heaps and did no more.'"

Concerning the names of the several mountains, Mr. Gold gives some interesting information. Besides speaking of a number which were named after men who lived in their vicinity, such as Hough Mountain, Rugg Hill, Waller Hill, Bunker Hill, Dudley Town Hill, and Clark Hill, he says : "About half a mile south from his house (Deacon Waller's, at the foot of Waller Hill), we find another large hill, properly called Tower Dale. This noble name, thus written by the early settlers, has degenerated in common speech, into the insignificant title of Tarrydiddle. Going in the same direction, but a little farther removed from the river, we find Buck Mountain, so called from the great number of deer that used to be found there. The first hill below West Cornwall, and nearer the river, was called Green Mountain before it became denuded of its pines and hemlocks, which in early times covered it densely. Then next south and easterly lies a long and high hill called Mine Mountain, from the minerals it was supposed to contain. Cream Hill, lying in the north middle part of the town, received this appellation from the superiority of its



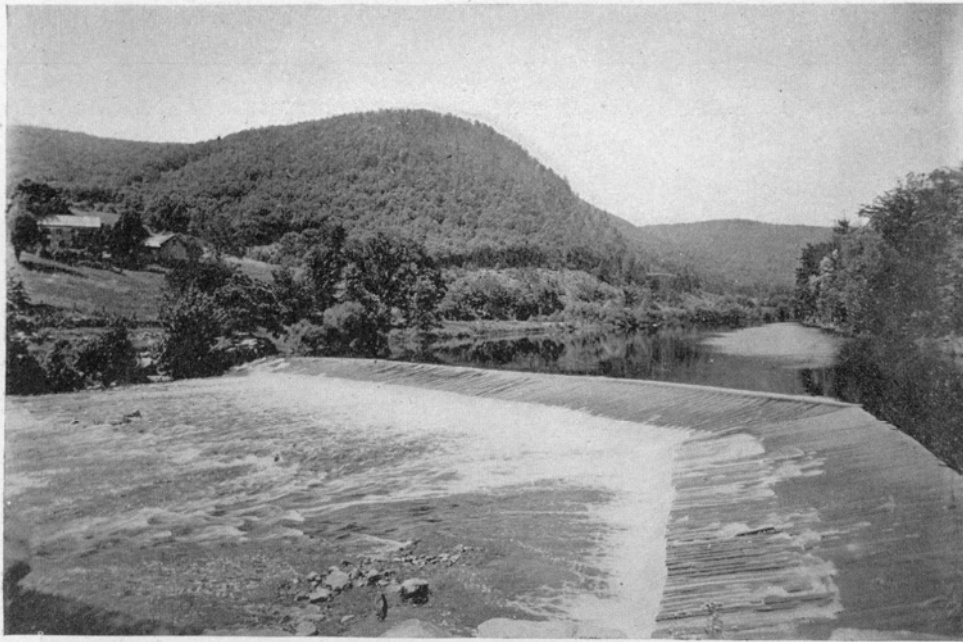
VIEW IN WEST CORNWALL.

soil and the beauty of its scenery. A pretty lake lies at its foot, and in fair view from its southern aspect, called Cream Hill Lake. A high and steep mountain range lies at the northwest of Sedgwick Hollow, called Titus Mountain, and was so named from a young man of that name who, with others, was amusing himself in rolling rocks down the steep side of the mountain, and who had the misfortune to break his thigh.

"South of Cream Hill rises an isolated hill of no great height, but rough

and uncomely, to which is given the name of Rattlesnake Hill. I set down here the tradition of fifty rattlesnakes killed at one time on this hill, lest the story grow larger and tax our credulity too much as to the origin of the name. This raid was too much for the snakes, as none have been found there in the period of authentic history.

"Southeasterly from Clark Hill is the most elevated land in the state, lying mostly in Goshen, from the apex of which is a view of Long Island Sound. This is called Mohawk Mountain.

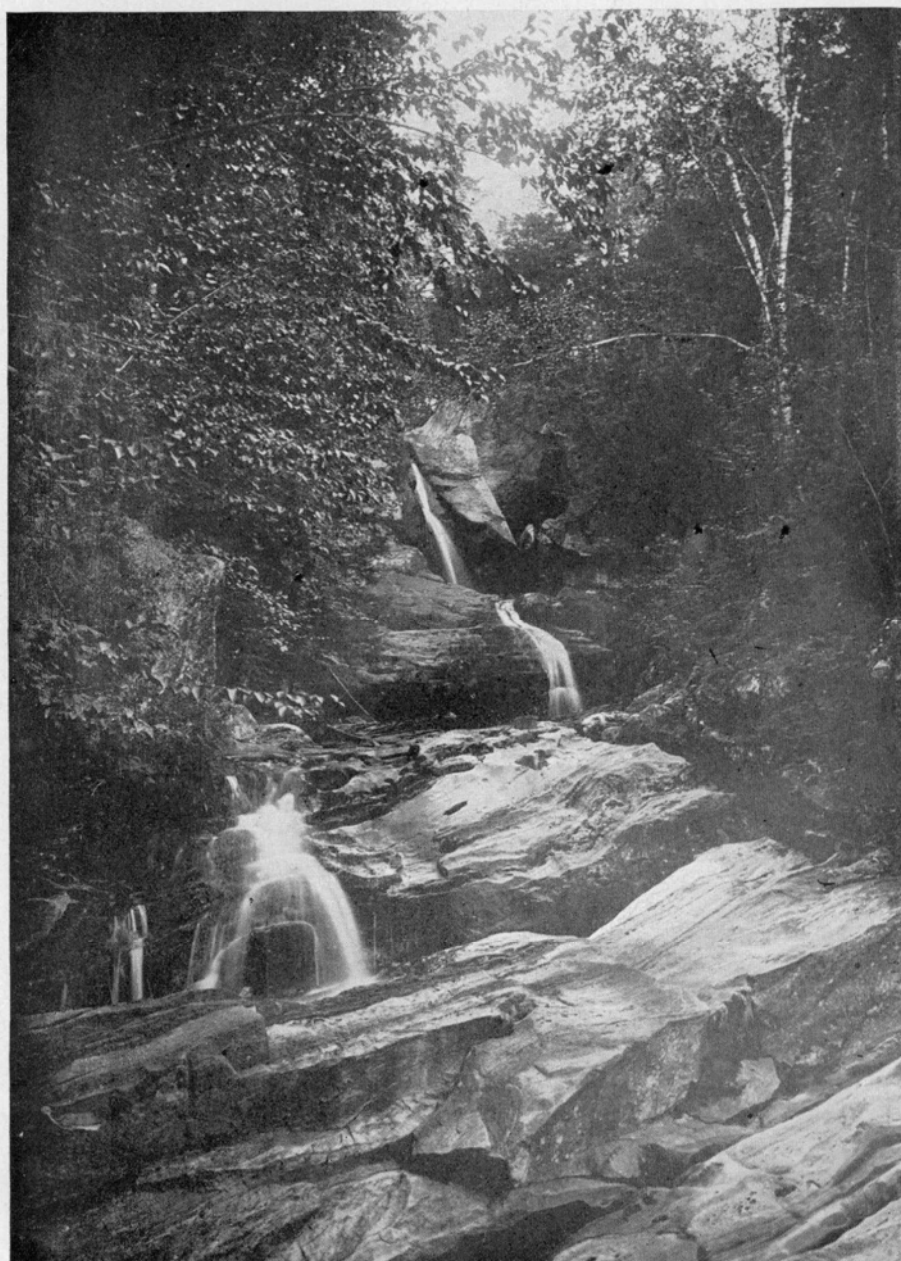


RIVER VIEW AT WEST CORNWALL.

"Three hundred acres of land given by the General Assembly to Yale College, is located in Cornwall, and goes by the name of College Land. Bloody Mountain, so named from a bloody tragedy *not* enacted there, lies north of the old Goshen and Sharon turnpike, northwest from the center of the town.

"From the summits of many of these hills extensive and magnificent views are presented, extending west of the Hudson River and over a large share of Berkshire County in Massachusetts. There are many other minor hills, the beauty and picturesque appearance of which, to be fully appreciated must be seen."

The keynote is struck in the last sentence. It is vain to attempt to describe the endless number of mountain and valley views, each with some special feature of attractiveness, each grand and splendid in itself, that greet the traveler through this region. To attempt the description is mere idle repetition of words that fail utterly to adequately express his feelings.



KENT FALLS.

Such were the sights that met our travelers' eyes throughout their whole drive. From Cornwall their line of travel for the next few days was through Kent, over to Roxbury, and then north through the Shepaug Valley to Washington and Litchfield, then through Goshen back to their starting point at Canaan.

And this short trip was but one of many of equal interest that could be taken in the same region, for the places necessarily omitted in traversing the ground but once, were legion.

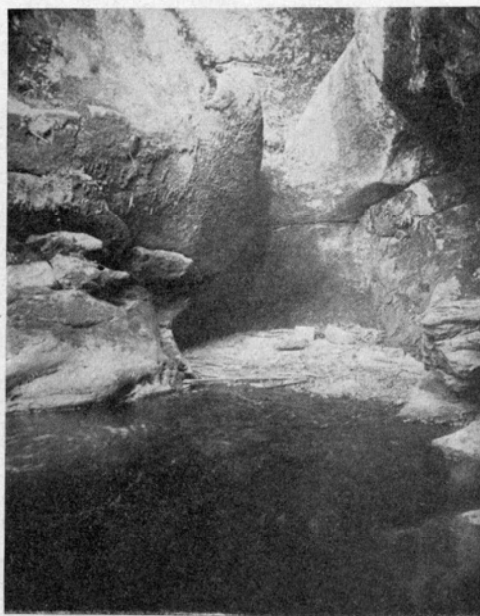
The magnificent mountain scenery was diversified by the numerous beautiful water scenes constantly met with on the Housatonic, Shepaug and the smaller streams, with here and there a pretty lake, besides visits to the rugged and picturesque ravines at Kent and Roxbury Falls.

Who of us would not say with Uncle William, when in such a spot as either of the latter places, "Like it? Why I could stay here all day."

Cool, restful and delightful in every way, there the lover of nature is in his element, and few there be of us who do not retain an instinctive passion for such scenes, though it be, perhaps, what remains to us of the most refined of savage instincts, stifled in vain through a thousand years of civilization.

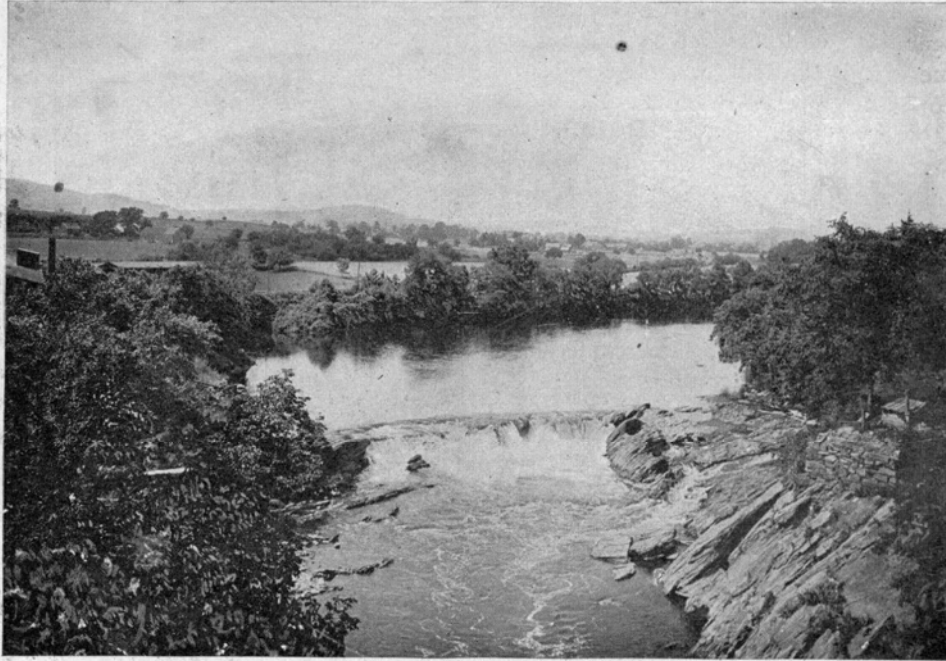
Perhaps because we associate with the Indian what is most rugged and wild, the mind naturally goes back to the aboriginal inhabitant when contemplating this region, despite all the evidences of the two centuries of the white man's occupancy. And this aside from the Indian names, which we hope will long remain. Barber, in his "Connecticut Historical Collections," tells us that, "Gideon Mauwehu, the sachem of the Scaticook tribe, in one of his hunting excursions came to the summit of the mountain which rises almost precipitously west of Scatacook (Kent), and beholding the beautiful valley and river below, determined to make it the place of his future residence. It was indeed a lovely and desirable place; there were several hundred acres of excellent land, covered with grass like a prairie, with some few scattering trees interspersed. The river was well supplied with fish, and on the mountain, on both sides, was found an abundance of deer and other wild game. At this place Mauwehu collected the Indians and became their sachem."

Well has Mr. Hollister expressed it when he said, in the address previously alluded to: "All over the country lie scattered these simple mementoes of a race which held dominion over the soil for unknown ages before the English



MAIDEN'S WELL—KENT FALLS.

emigrant ever set foot upon it. His implements of war, sharp as the fabled dragon's teeth, but not vital like them, still lie buried in the fields over which he once hunted the wild deer, the bear, the moose and the otter. The plow-boy whose mind is filled with stories of the Indian wars, continues to turn them up with the share from year to year, and stops his team with a shuddering chill to handle the serrated arrow and grooved tomahawk. Their household utensils—the stone mortar and pestle, the pots in which they boiled their venison, the pans in which they fried their fish, the stone pipe that sent up its grave offering of peace around the council-fire, their grotesque attempts at sculpture,

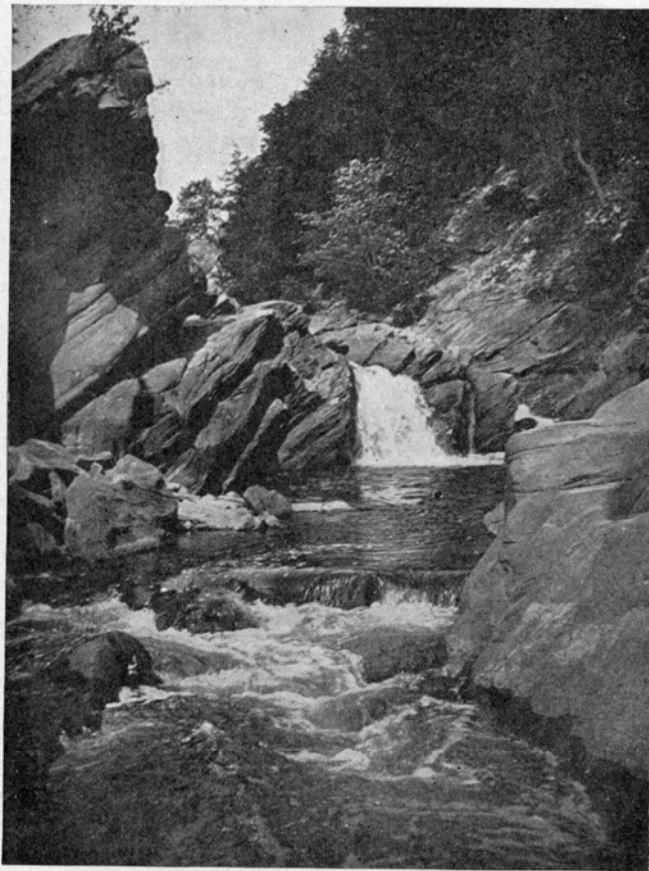


FALLS BELOW NEW MILFORD.

representing their grim ideal of a god—are still extant in the country, but fast passing away. Although the war-whoop echoes no longer among the cliffs of Cornwall and Scaticook; although the bark palace of the chief of Werauhau-maug has crumbled by the side of the Great Falls at New Milford, and his people no longer frequent the borders of the lake that still bears his name; though the tribe of Pomperaug has melted away like the dew, and the meadows of Weatague are swept yearly by the scythe of the Saxon; yet here and there in warm sheltered nooks, by river-bank or brook-side, the bones of the warrior rest in the alluvial mould. Whence came this wild fierce people, wandering without being nomadic, cultivating history without the aid of letters, generous without knowing how to forgive, scornful of death when called to look him in the face, yet lurking like the fox to avoid his approach? Whence came they? How long did they remain proprietors of the country, and why did they melt so suddenly away before the rays of civilization?"

We wish we could answer. Even Uncle William, who was of a reflective turn of mind and had given much thought to such problems, vouchsafed no explanation. Besides the scenery and thoughts of the noble red man, there were many things of more recent historical interest to claim his attention. At Kent and Roxbury the extensive iron works formerly in operation; the reminder by a monument in the center of the latter town of that hero of the Revolution, Colonel Seth Warner; at Washington, Litchfield and Goshen, of many things that have made those places well known.

Nor was the trip lacking in amusing and humorous incidents. Such were



ROXBURY FALLS.

the ones, to his regret, that Uncle William failed to get pictures of. But that is the usual way of such things—the biggest fish get away.

In due course of time, in spite of having the laziest horse in the county, Uncle William and Cousin Jim got back to Canaan, returned the horse to the stable, complimented the owner on possessing such a fine animal, and took the train for Hartford.

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