



## **Picturesque America; or, the land we live in**

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

**Bryant, William Cullen**

**New York, 1872**

Harper's Ferry.

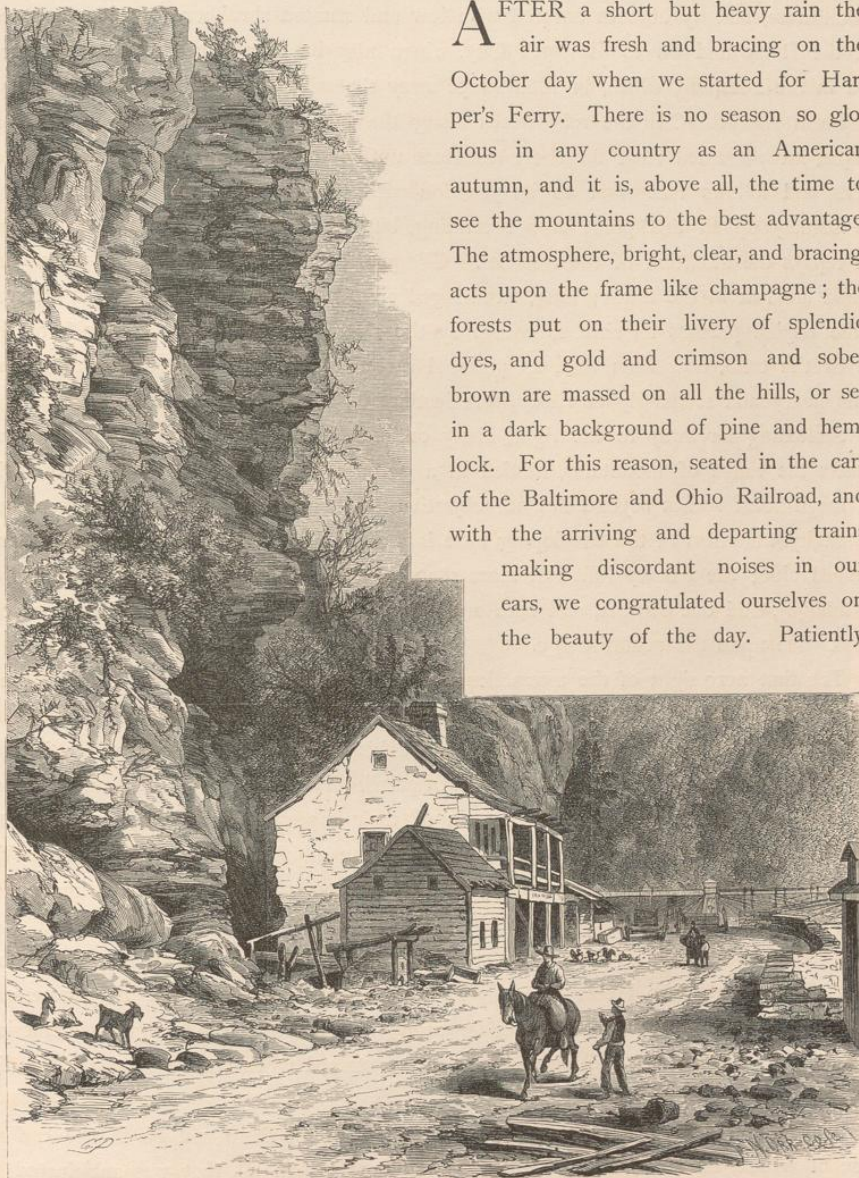
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## HARPER'S FERRY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRANVILLE PERKINS.

AFTER a short but heavy rain the air was fresh and bracing on the October day when we started for Harper's Ferry. There is no season so glorious in any country as an American autumn, and it is, above all, the time to see the mountains to the best advantage. The atmosphere, bright, clear, and bracing, acts upon the frame like champagne; the forests put on their livery of splendid dyes, and gold and crimson and sober brown are massed on all the hills, or set in a dark background of pine and hemlock. For this reason, seated in the cars of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and with the arriving and departing trains making discordant noises in our ears, we congratulated ourselves on the beauty of the day. Patiently





waiting, we watch the passengers upon the platform, uniting and dispersing, aggregating in little groups, only to dissolve and form again—a cosmopolitan scene, for here come, going East, West, or South, representatives of all nations. We soon, however, leave these scenes behind us, and are skirting the brick-fields lying on the western suburbs of Baltimore, and by hillocks covered with low and stunted shrubbery of cedar and oak, past the Relay and on to Ellicott's City, where may be seen the traces of the great flood in the Patapsco, which, in 1868 swept away the mills and dwellings in the valley.

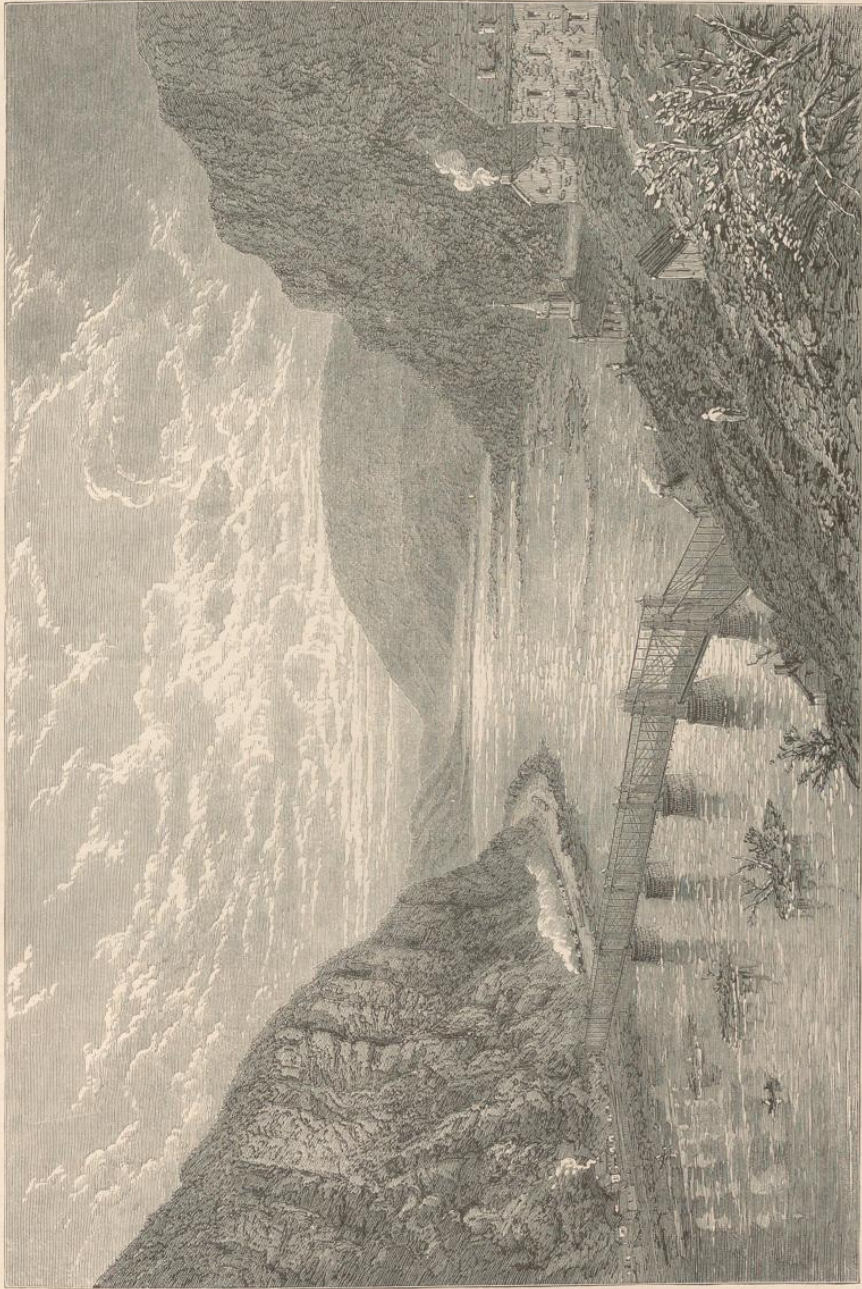
From Ellicott's City the road winds along the Patapsco, and only leaves that picturesque, artist-haunted river for short distances until it strikes the Potomac at Point of Rocks, and follows that river to its junction with the Shenandoah at Harper's Ferry. The scenery up to this point is not striking, but often possesses a quiet beauty that well repays the attention of the traveller. Glimpses of sequestered woodland-paths wind off and are lost in the forest; long, tree-fringed river-reaches come into view at intervals as the engine pursues its sinuous course by the river-bank, in full sight now from this side of the train, now from that, its polished mountings glittering in the sunlight, and all its heavy and seemingly unviably bulk instinct with graceful life and easy power.

Stretching far away to the right, dimly outlined in their characteristic smoky blue, appears the range of mountains, nestled in a gorge of which the gate-way to the wild and magnificent scenes beyond lies our objective point, Harper's Ferry. As we approach, the smoky whiteness of the enveloping haze is dissipated, and gives place to a more pronounced blue; the billowy hills roll more sharply clear to the eye; the irregular lines of the foliage stand out distinct, and here and there shaggy and wind-dishevelled pines cut the sky-line upon the summit-ridge.

The first near sight of the mountains is inevitably one of disappointment. Is it not thus with all the stupendous works of Nature? The man who expects to stand spell-bound and awe-stricken before Niagara, will find his emotion very commonplace in contrast to the exalted state of feeling he anticipated. Very seldom, indeed, are the combinations such as to present these scenes in all their impressive grandeur; and rarer still is the mind that is capable of comprehending at once all that is taught by them. Yet those who have been merely summer sojourners among the "eternal hills," can understand, if they have used their time wisely, why the mountaineer comes gradually to love them. He can feel, seeing them again, the force of the attachment that animated, thousands of years ago, the Hebrew people, whose strong places of defence they were, and that animates to-day the Switzer, who, far away from his native Alps, grows homesick, even at times unto death, and whose eyes are tear-stained whenever he hears the familiar "Ranz des Vaches."

The imagination at first may refuse to be satisfied, but there will be in the end no sense of failure, no lack of fulfilment of all, and more than all, that was anticipated to those who become friends with the mountains, who look down into their dwarfing val-





HARPER'S FERRY.



leys, who wander along their still paths, opening, by sudden surprises, laughing cascades, and odorous with the resinous pine and hemlock, and who see towering far above, bearing up their massive weight of greenery, their sheltering forests. Climb the Maryland Heights, as we are to do to-day, and pause on the ascent and look back. Fair and open lies the northern landscape, bounded by its semicircle of mountains. How the mind expands and feels a sense of delight and power as the eye takes in, at one sweep, the glorious scene! The feeling that pictures us as slowly traversing the huge mountains, insignificant atoms on its vast surface, ants that crawl over an ant-hill, vanishes. And then to this first exhilaration, this flush and glow of pleasure, succeeds the softer, calmer mood that sees, in the still and marvellously beautiful vision, but one of the least of the wonderful works of the Creator. There is no disappointment in a mountain.

While we have been moralizing, the train has thundered over the costly and graceful bridge built by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, and which spans the Potomac, on five substantial stone piers, just at its junction with the Shenandoah. When fairly on the platform and the train has left the view unobstructed, we see rising, sheer and inaccessible, directly before us the rocky sides of the Maryland Heights. Upon their laminated surface the curious eye ranges among the overhanging masses of projecting stone, to this point and to that, in search of the well-known Profile Rock. It catches, jutting out from a crevice in the wall-like side, a mass of shrubbery—the hair; a little lower down a patch of stunted bushes—the epaulets; glancing then a little to the left, the imagination quickly forms the features. Curiosity being thus satisfied, we turn to the foot of these frowning cliffs, where are seen the slow, languid canal-boats, almost imperceptibly in motion, crawling into the lock at the bridge, and vanishing by inches around the mountain. On the left is Bolivar Heights, and below them is the ruined armory at the ferry—a long row of walls, windowless, roofless, blackened and desolate. Far up, the mountains recede and become low hills, and close in upon the rocky-islanded Potomac, which comes boldly sweeping down past the town, and meets the Shenandoah, and unites with it on its way to the Chesapeake and the ocean.

A brief stroll through the town itself will furnish many items of antiquarian interest, and will also bring to mind some stirring and important scenes in modern history.

The town of Harper's Ferry is built at the foot of the narrow tongue of land that thrusts itself out like a cutwater, separating the Potomac and the Shenandoah, and known as Bolivar Heights. It lies in Jefferson County, West Virginia. Just across the Potomac are the Maryland Heights, in Washington County, Maryland, and over the Shenandoah, beyond Loudon Heights, lies Virginia proper. Including the little town of Bolivar, on the heights, the population of Harper's Ferry is about two thousand. The principal street runs parallel with the Shenandoah, with a side-street ascending the hill to the right, perpendicular to which numerous stairs, cut in the solid rock, lead up still steeper ascents.



Quaint and old-fashioned in its best estate, two causes have contributed to make the town still more sleepy and dilapidated than is its normal condition. The recent war stunned it. Then came the disastrous flood of October, 1870, in the Shenandoah. Pass where you will, there are evidences of the desolation left behind by these two occurrences. And the people of the Ferry have very naturally lost heart. They talk about the old days when the Shenandoah ran the mills and the government rifle-works on its banks; when the armory was in busy activity, and a regiment of lusty workmen hammered and rolled and moulded the arms which it was then thought would never be used

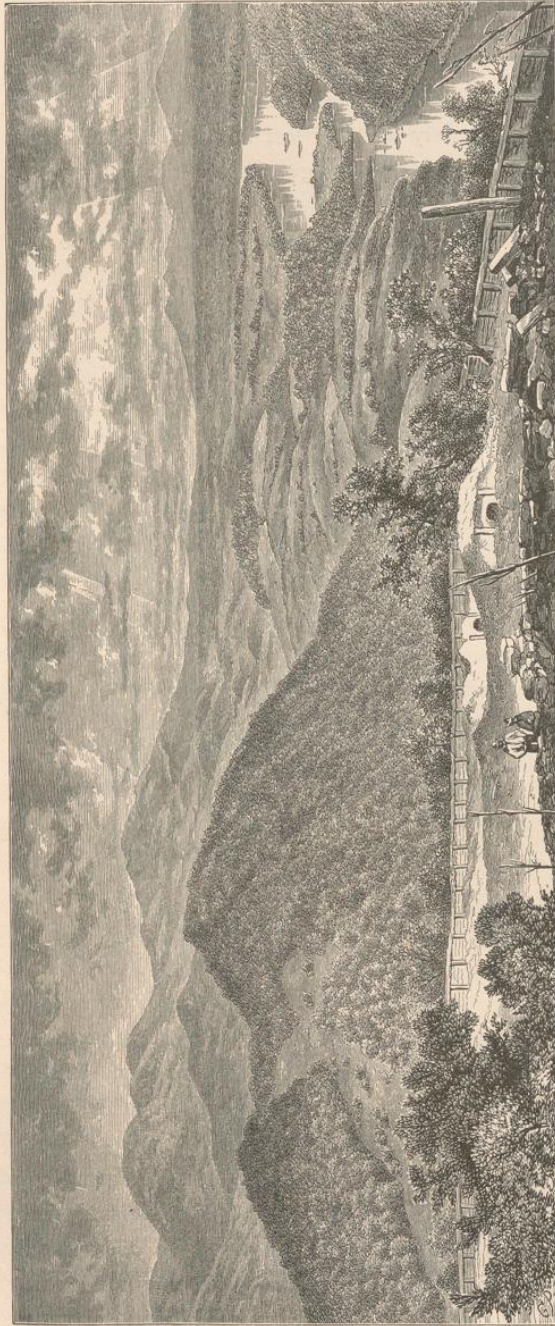


View from Jefferson Rock.

except against foreign foes; when many millions of solid dollars—a golden Pactolus—poured into the arms of the thriving little village from the national treasury. The inhabitants now talk of these days of prosperity with regret, with even a mild kind of hope for better things in the future, but with no buoyancy of spirit.

The place takes its name from Robert Harper, a native of Oxford, England, who emigrated to this country in 1723. Harper settled at Philadelphia, and seems to have been a man of much ingenuity. At this time the infant colonies were offering high prices to skilled workmen, and Harper, being by profession an architect, was frequently required to travel to distant parts of the country. It was when on his way to erect a





London Mountain and the Shenandoah.

meeting-house for the members of the Society of Friends, whose settlement, near where Winchester now stands, in the rich Valley of Virginia, was even then, in 1747, flourishing and increasing, that Harper, as a short route to his destination, first saw this pass. He was so attracted by it that he bought a tract of land here, which was subsequently confirmed to him by Lord Fairfax. In time, as the country became more settled, and the passage through the barrier of the Blue Ridge better known, he established a ferry here. The house erected by Harper, on what is now High Street, is still to be seen. In outward appearance it is one of the newest in the town; and, if it were not for the semicircular, latticed window in the side-wall, which betrays its antiquity, it might, like a well-preserved old beau, hold its own with its younger contemporaries, and deny its years. In 1794 the prosperity of Harper's Ferry, for half a century and more, became assured. It was at that date, and during the administration of General Washington, that the town,



on account of the many advantages it offered, but more especially for its unrivalled water-power, was chosen as the site of the national armory. Land was purchased along the Potomac and Shenandoah. Subsequently Bolivar and Loudon Heights were acquired, and the buildings of the armory and the dwellings of the operatives gradually formed in themselves a small but thriving settlement. So the Ferry prospered until the night of Sunday, October 16, 1859. From that night the town was doomed. Stealthily, at ten o'clock, a band of twenty men crossed the railroad-bridge—then a clumsy, covered structure—over the Potomac. They came from the Maryland side. Quietly the watchmen were captured and the armory seized. They at once proceeded to establish and fortify themselves against an attack. They then threw out pickets, and arrested all persons who ventured abroad. A colored man, who incautiously approached too near the guarded railroad-bridge, was shot down and died soon after. At the dawn of the next day, as the sun struggled through the rising

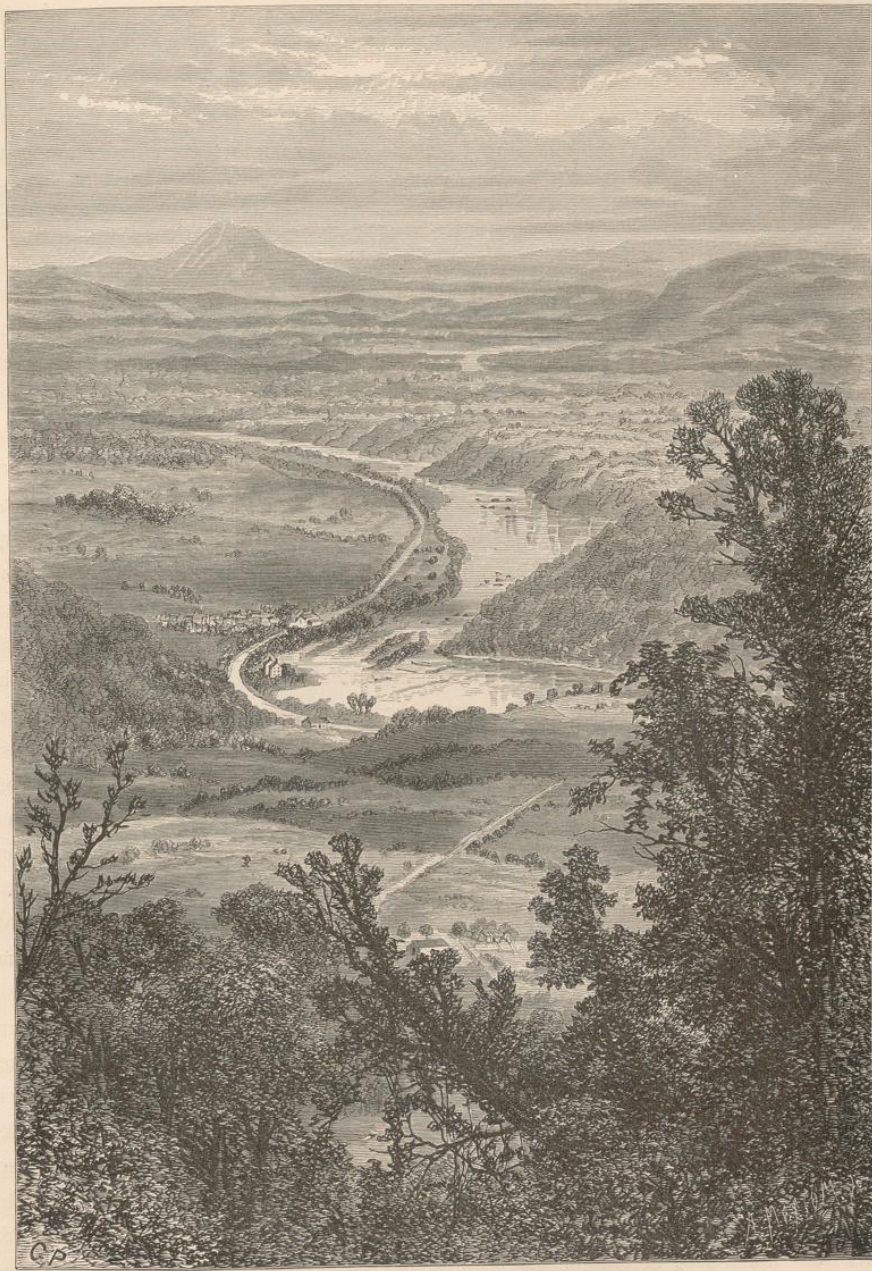


Pleasant Valley.



mists of the river, the little town was all excitement. The purpose of the invaders, their force, the prospect of other attacks by fresh bands waiting in the fastnesses of the mountains, were all unknown, and added the element of mystery to the actual fact, that was but too patent, that a lion had suddenly pounced on their sheepfold. All through the long morning a scattered fusillade was kept up between the armory and the neighboring houses; and the sharp crack of the rifle from the overshadowing hills was quickly returned from some one of the barred windows below. Gradually the toils tightened around the party desperately at bay in the armory. Some of them now make an attempt to break through the meshes. It is in vain. Take, for instance, one scene—a mere etching amid the terrible occurrences of the day. One man, Lehman by name, threw himself into the Potomac River with the intention of escaping. He was fired upon, was wounded, raised his hand as if to surrender, and fell. There was no mercy. A rifleman waded out to the rock where the wounded man lay—they show you the place yet—and deliberately put his rifle to his head and blew out his brains. Fighting now with the energy of despair, Brown—for, of course, it is of the celebrated “Brown raid” that we are speaking—now retreated to the engine-house, the only building of the whole armory which is still standing. There he remained all through Tuesday night with his wounded and his prisoners. It was a sad night for the town of Harper’s Ferry—but yesterday so quiet and peaceful, now with the dead in several households, and the fate of the morrow involved in uncertainty. It had rained all Monday. The night was dark, the atmosphere raw and cold. The conflict was stayed, but the hours wore away in unceasing watchfulness. At seven on Tuesday morning help came. Colonel Robert E. Lee arrived with a force of marines, hastily gathered together, and dispatched from Washington. The strong doors of the engine-house were soon battered in, and, with the loss of one man killed, the invaders were captured. Brown was executed at Charlestown soon after—an impolitic proceeding, in the opinion of many Southern men. So ended the Harper’s Ferry raid, and so commenced, in reality, our civil war. During that conflict, Harper’s Ferry was alternately in the possession of the Northern and Southern forces, and suffered from both. When the ordinance of secession was passed by the Virginia Convention, the Ferry was the station of a company of United States regulars, under the command of a Lieutenant Jones. Rumors came as thick and fast as leaves from the mountain woods in November. The Virginia militia were marching to capture the Ferry. They were coming up the Valley; they were coming down the Potomac; they were near Bolivar; they were on Maryland Heights. So threatening was the aspect of affairs that Lieutenant Jones was ordered to retreat. Then, for the first time, the torch—to be thereafter the instrument of so much destruction, bitterness, and suffering, in the annals of the village—was applied. The armory was fired. The smoke of the burning buildings curled up, black and ominous through the still air, and loud detonations shook the ground as the explosive material stored within took fire. Much of the armory was then saved by the exertions of the





THE POTOMAC FROM MARYLAND HEIGHTS.



people after the troops had departed. The arsenal alone was completely destroyed, with about fifteen thousand stand of arms. On the night of the 18th of April the Southern forces came in, and soon Colonel Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson assumed command. The machinery in the workshops was taken out and removed to Fayetteville, North Carolina. On the 14th of the following June the Southern forces, then under the command of General Joe Johnston, abandoned the Ferry, as of no strategic importance. They completed the destruction already begun. The railroad-bridge was blown up, and the main armory-buildings fired. By this time the town was nearly deserted. Many of its inhabitants had entered the armies of the North or the South; others had left it for more peaceful scenes. The few that remained lived almost continually within the sound of the cannon and the rifle. "For a long time every thing that moved in the streets was shot at." Field-glasses swept the town and the neighboring Bolivar, the favorite scouting-ground of the southern side. It was a fearful ordeal to the few citizens who still clung to the Ferry, as, between two fires, they moved uneasily from place to place.

The last important scene that closes this eventful history had its commencement on the 5th of September, 1862, when Jackson's corps crossed the Potomac, at White's Ferry, with Lee's army of invasion. On the 13th Jackson was at Harper's Ferry, McLaws and Walker were on Maryland and Loudon Heights respectively, and Colonel Miles was caught in an untenable position on Bolivar. Here the record of the civil war, as regards the Ferry, rightly stops. McClellan, after Antietam, concentrated his army here. "The whole peninsula formed by the Potomac and the Shenandoah, from Smallwood's Ridge to the junction of the rivers, as well as the surrounding heights, was dotted with tents, and at night was aglow with thousands of watch-fires. From Camp Hill—the ridge that divides the two villages—the spectacle was magnificent, especially at night. A hum of voices, like that of an immense city or the hoarse murmur of the ocean, rose from the valleys on either side, and filled the air with a confusion of sounds."

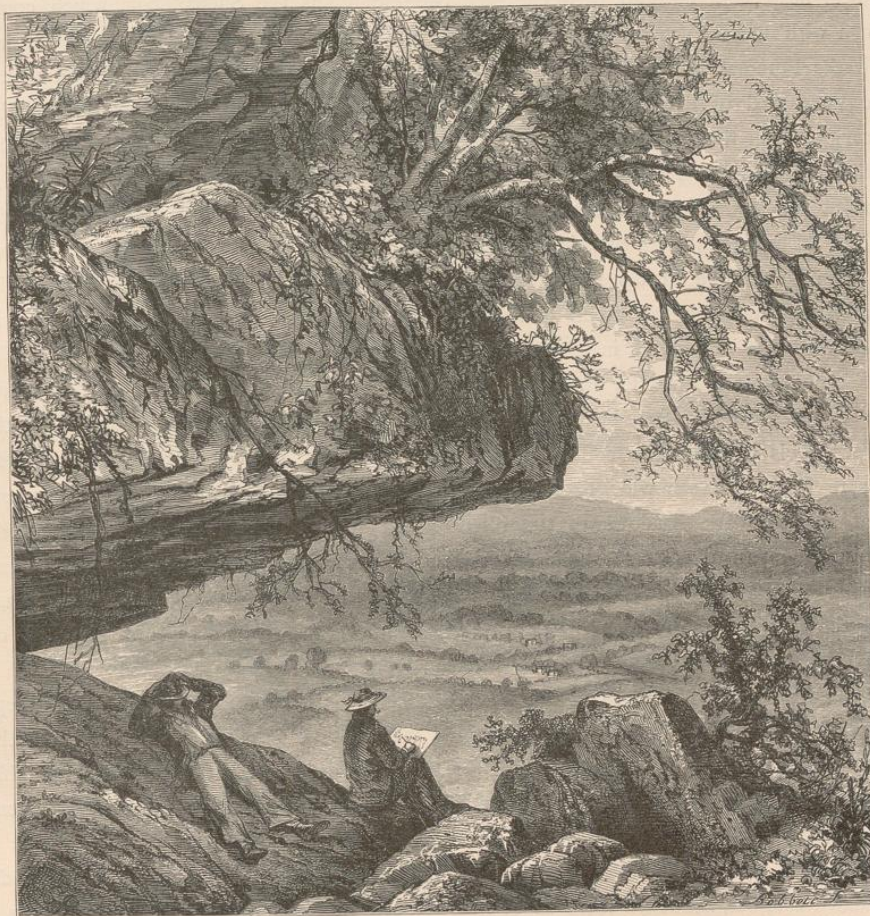
This brief history of the Ferry, like the story of some war-worn veteran, will give an interest to the traces left by the tide of war that ebbed and flowed over and around the place.

We are now on our way to Jefferson's Rock. Perched high up to the right are the bare walls of the Episcopal and Methodist churches, whose joyous bells, in other times, aroused the echoes of the mountains on the calm Sabbath, while the worshippers wound their slow way up the steep hill, and perhaps paused at the church-door to take a last look at the glorious scene below, the wooded heights, the shining river, the sleeping town, and to thank God that their little home, secure among its sheltering peaks, was so peaceful and unthreatened. We pass by the side of the Episcopal church, which, in its time, must have been an imposing structure. We scramble over the rubbish and look in, and find all foulness and pollution. The four bare walls are open to the sky; the windows are seamed and broken; the place where the altar stood is vacant, and the



marks of the gallery-stairs still wind their way upward into vacancy. Every trace of wood-work has vanished. It was not burned, but torn away gradually in the mere wanton riot of desecration and destruction.

A few steps farther bring us to Jefferson Rock, a remarkable stratified formation that



Maryland Heights.

rises abruptly from the street below. It is the pride of the town, and, among the townspeople, is almost a name "to conjure by." Upon it, according to one account, Jefferson inscribed his name; other authorities say that it was here that he wrote his "Notes on Virginia," "in answer to a foreigner of distinction." The first is, of course, the fact, and the other the accretion that time has added. Here we have the best view attain-



able of the mountains from their base, and of the meeting of the waters in this Vale of Avoca. Beyond the town loom up the Maryland Heights; to the left, Loudon frowns, crowned with its wealth of shaggy foliage, its sides seamed with innumerable fissures and dry ravines made in the crumbling rock by the winter-torrents. At the foot of these ravines the loose earth and gravel washed down has been piled in high and conical heaps. In the gap between these two mountains the Shenandoah, which comes down with many a curve and deflection, skirting the Blue Ridge from Bath County, and the Potomac, which flows south from the table-lands of the Alleghanies and divides the water-shed of the Ohio River and the Chesapeake Bay, unite. How the opening through which their waters find a passage was formed originally—whether by a sudden rifting apart in some violent struggle of Nature, or by the eating away of the barrier that at one time confined here a great interior lake having its outlet by the low hills of the Susquehanna—is a question for the geologist. The unscientific spectator will have no wish to indulge in dry speculations in the presence of the scene that meets his eyes as he turns at the Rock and follows the broad river through the rugged gap, while on either side stand, in silent guard, the Sentinel Peaks. There is no grandeur in the scene—none claimed for it. Life, brightness, and quiet beauty, distinguish it. Over the Shenandoah the ferry-boat turns and twists among the boulders, and seeks the deeper pools and the slow eddies that give it a passage. The fair river, viewed so near, is spread out between wide, enclosing banks, and catches the silvery glitter of the sunlight and the dark shadows of the hills on its ample bosom, dotted with the black, obtruding forms of rocks, around which the slow current chafes gently in swirls and circling ripples. Around the Maryland Heights run both the railroad and the canal, and the long trains and the unwieldy, cabined, awning-sheltered boats turn the foot of the ridge at intervals, and follow the sinuous river, ever trending southward.

Before visiting Maryland Heights and the superb panoramic view that there sweeps around almost from horizon to horizon, a few moments will be well spent in seeing the less striking scenery of the Heights of Bolivar. Unless the traveller be a remarkably good pedestrian, a carriage and horses will have to be procured for part of the ascent of the former, and the drive around Bolivar over a good road can easily be made a part of the day's programme. If dismayed at the board-signs that, projecting from dilapidated shanties, announce them to be livery-stables, he express doubts as to procuring a respectable team, he forgets one thing—he is in Virginia, and on the borders of the Valley. The man that is surprised, therefore, to see a pretty woman or a fine horse is strangely unacquainted with the latitude. Our landlord, upon being consulted, promises us the horses in a moment, and, in little more than that time, they are at the door—a sorrel of mustang blood, and the prettiest three-year-old Black Hawk we had set eyes upon for many a day. The road around Bolivar is the segment of a circle, the first part of which lies along the Shenandoah and the unused Slackwater Canal, bordered by





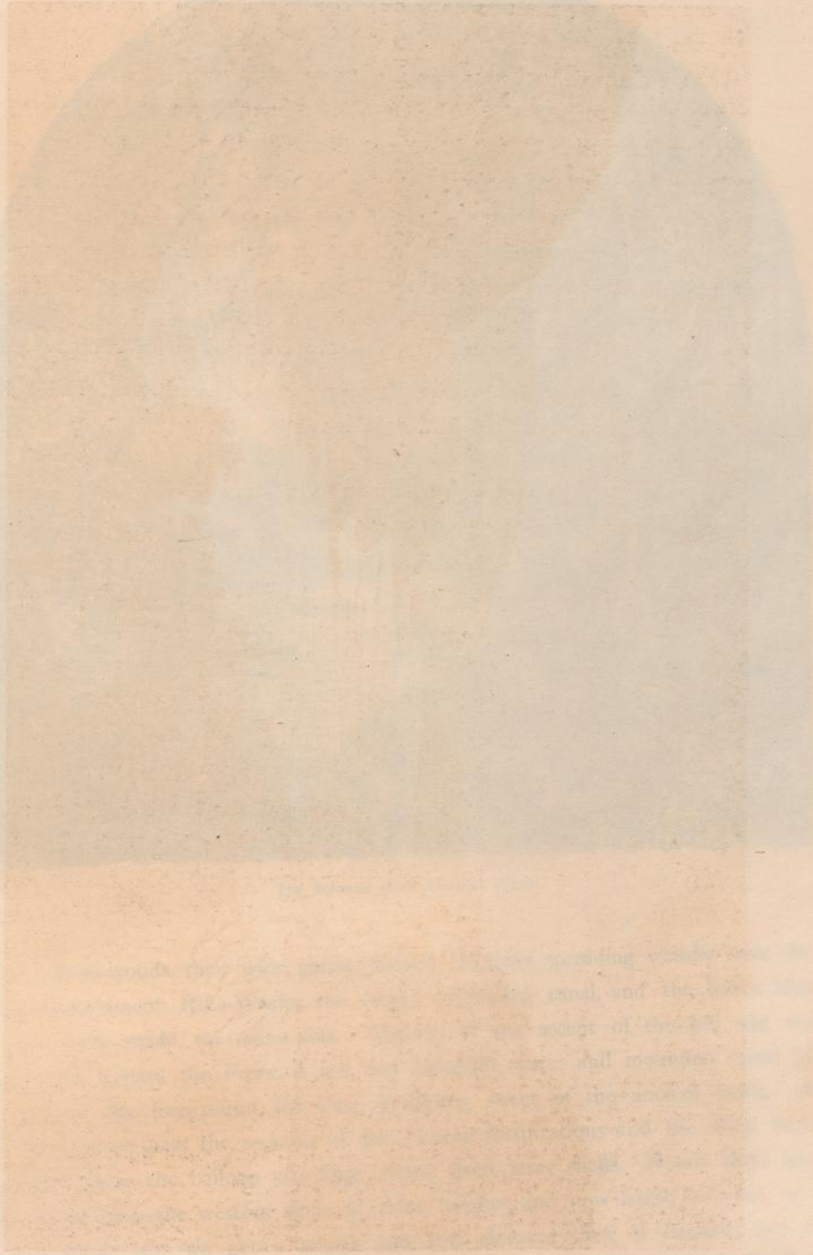




*Shavers Ferry by Moonlight*

New York, D. Appleton & Co.



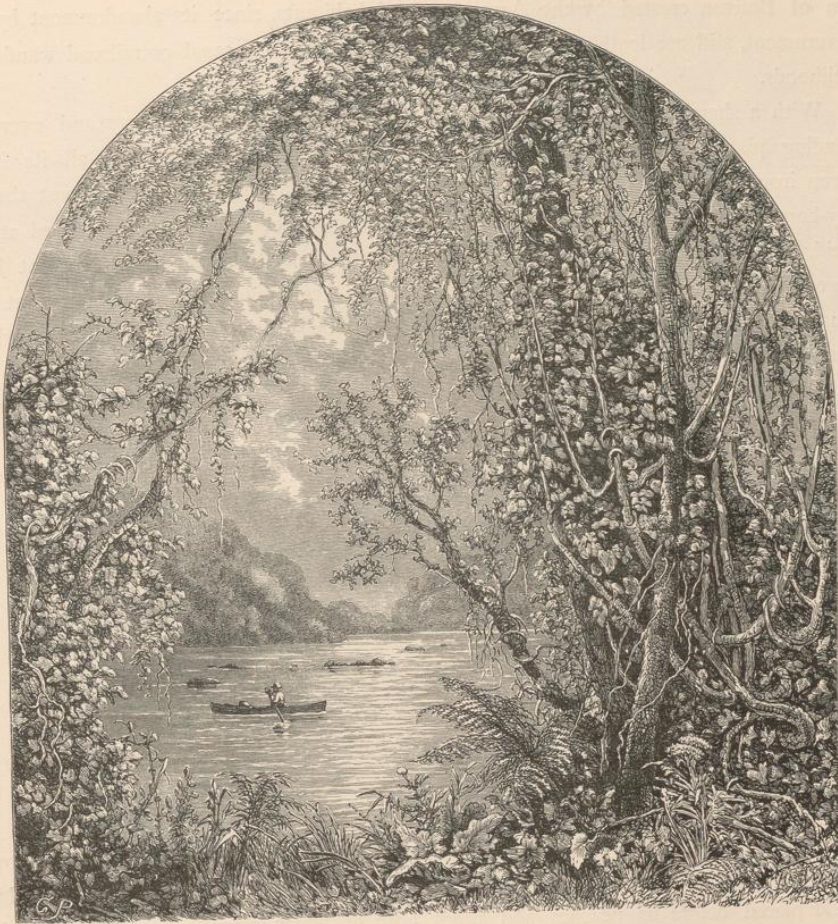


and well-illuminated. We mean through the









The Potomac above Harper's Ferry.

majestic cotton-woods, their wide, gaunt, flecked branches spreading weirdly over the dismantled Government Rifle-Works, the empty, crumbling canal, and the havoc that war and flood have made on every side. Midway of the ascent of the hill, the scenery, looking back toward the Ferry, is soft and beautiful, water and mountain toned by distance, and, in the foreground, the long, straggling street of the ancient town. As we reach the top, we pass the remains of the Federal fortifications and the deep, bush-covered valley where the balloon was kept secure from stray shells. Nearly three hundred houses stood upon the western slope of these heights, and now hardly a trace of them remains. From here we get a nearer and less elevated view of Loudon and North Mountains over a rich and well-tilled farming country. We return through the neat vil-



lage of Bolivar, created by the Armory. Its inhabitants, since its abandonment by the Government, still are loath to leave their homes, and find on canal or railroad wandering livelihoods.

With a sharp deflection to the left, we pass through Harper's Ferry and over the sounding plank-roadway of the railroad-bridge, creaking metallicly with all its interwoven iron net-work. Our road is a narrow one, leading along the canal and past the old ferry-house, brooding under the beetling cliffs that overshadow it. As we looked at the placid, sluggish waters by whose walled margin we rode, there was in them but little suggestive of danger or of the tragic. But, as we heard afterward, at a spot that was then pointed out to us, was drowned the young son of the good old lady at whose house we were to stop.

Turning to the right, the ponies tug and strain up the steep roadway that ascends the mountain. Under the overhanging boughs of the chestnut and the oak we go; over tiny rivulets, and with a final pull, heavier than any yet, the panting horses come to a willing halt.

"Colonel Unseld, gentlemen."

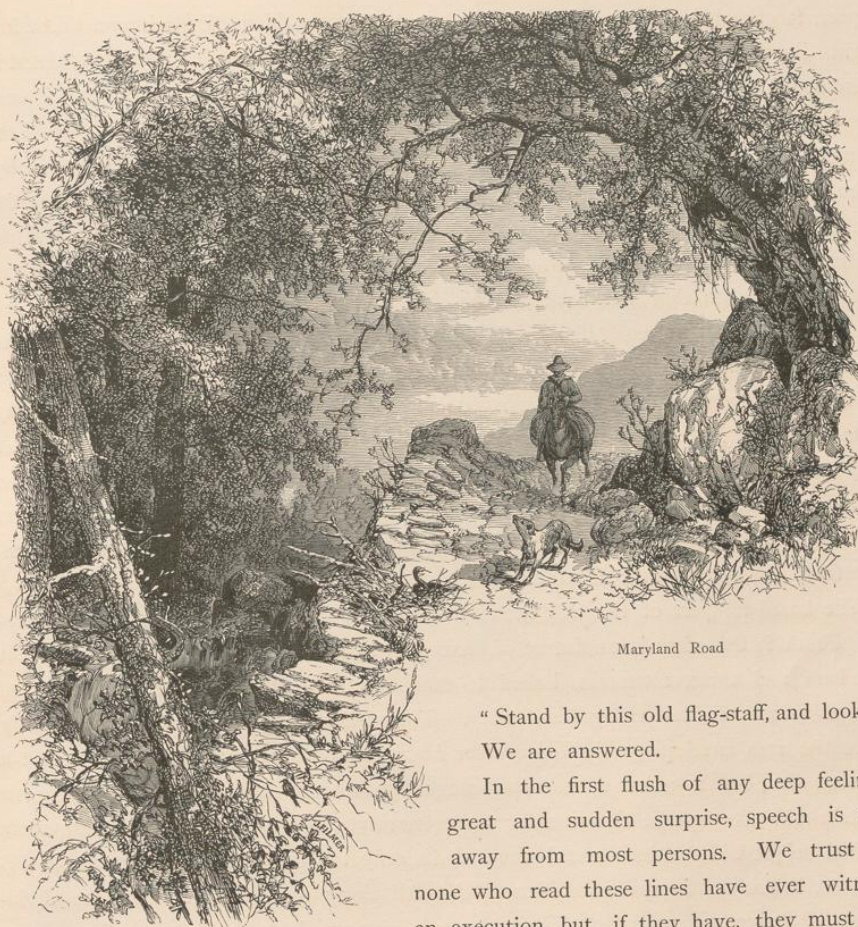
White-haired, and with flowing, white beard, slow and deliberate of speech, as are many Virginians, the colonel greets us.

All who take carriages must stop here, and make the ascent from this point on foot. They may, therefore, congratulate themselves that a propitious Providence led Colonel Unseld to select this spot for a private and most hospitable dwelling. To those who rest a while in her parlor, Mrs. Unseld—Scotch-Irish by descent, with the shrewdness of the one nation, and something of the ready wit of the other—can tell many interesting incidents of the time when the shells whizzed high overhead from the stone fort on the summit, and the yellow flag of the hospital flew over her homestead, and in this very parlor lay the dead and dying. Upon hospitable thoughts intent, Mrs. Unseld placed before us peaches and pears, both of which ripen late at this elevation. She was sorry, she said, but her "pears this year were like the politicians." And, truly, so we found them. They were outwardly sound and healthy, and some few did not belie their looks. Take up one at random, however, and the chances were that it was inwardly rotten from the core to the rind.

The landscape below, seen from the north side of the Heights, tempts us to linger a moment, and then, plunging into the woods, we begin the ascent up a dry ravine that leads directly to the summit. We find out before long why so many persons are content with the tame views from the Ferry itself. We have been over other mountains, but the steady, knee-breaking climb up the nearly perpendicular shoulder of these heights is the hardest piece of mountaineering we ever accomplished. Heated, in spite of the cool breeze that is blowing, and tired, we reach at last the ultimate ridge.

"Can any view repay such exertion?"





Maryland Road

"Stand by this old flag-staff, and look."

We are answered.

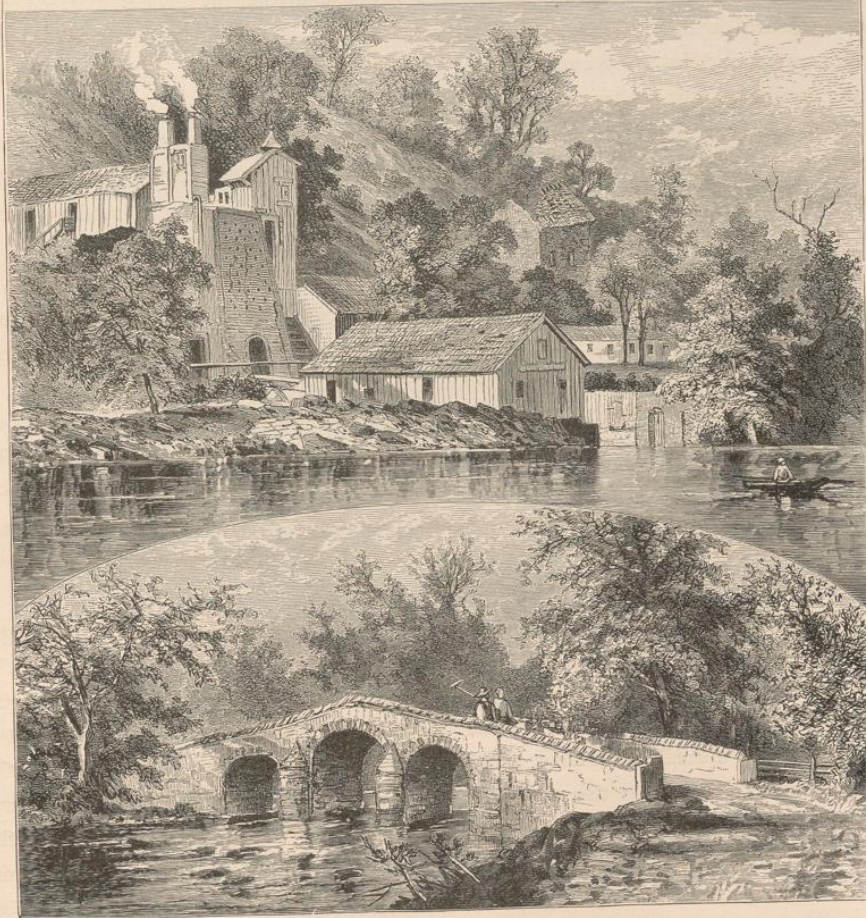
In the first flush of any deep feeling or great and sudden surprise, speech is taken away from most persons. We trust that none who read these lines have ever witnessed an execution, but, if they have, they must have been painfully struck with the simultaneous and involuntary movement, the shuddering, audible drawing of the breath, as the drop fell. It is with pleasure as it is with pain. They are brothers, though the outward resemblance be so slight. The long, involuntary exclamation that from more than one of our party testified to the effect of the interminable stretch of valley and hill that bewildered while it delighted, was therefore but the fitting tribute to the magnificence of the view that, as we touched the crowning ridge, burst upon us. It is beautiful in its undulating, wooded slopes, its cultivated fields. It is grand in its mountains, huge, and black, and stately, in the distance, fading and melting in the haze, with solitary peaks jutting boldly out, breaking the ranges as far as the eye can follow. Through the valley between flows the Potomac, curving to the right, then deflecting to the left, and, with a long stretch by the base of intruding hills, lost to sight, only to



reappear, for the last time, a gleaming mass in the brown, blended landscape. Loudon Heights lie on the other side of the river, and beyond is the rich Quaker settlement of Loudon County, that blessed spot, where the land drops fatness, and poverty is said to be unknown. We look down upon the broken outlines of the Short Hills, half concealed from view, in which lies Lovettsville Valley, and, on the other side, the Valley of the Shenandoah. At our feet are the fertile farms, the tree-embosomed houses, the symmetrical orchards, and the brown, harvested fields of Pleasant Valley. We are at an elevation of thirteen hundred feet. At our side is the old flag-staff erected by the Coast Survey when they fell back to this point to gain some necessary bearings for the map of the Atlantic coast-line. All around are scattered the ruins of the war. At that time the whole apex was bared of its trees, and the old height lifted its head, a very monk among mountains, with a shaven crown and a narrow belt of timber midway of the summit. But the earth hastens ever to hide the scars made on her bosom. A sturdy and dense growth of shrubbery now protects this space, save where, around the flag-staff and the Old Stone Fort, the stone foundations and the scattered rocks that composed the walls show how the soldiers encamped here endeavored to shelter themselves from the biting winds of winter.

The broad rampart of the Old Stone Fort now forms an excellent post of observation. From it the view is unobstructed, except where the Blue Ridge, throwing out spurs here and there, mountain linked to mountain in endless variety of height and shape, rises and divides valley from valley. This Blue Ridge has another peculiarity besides the soft, enveloping, distinctive color from which it takes its name. It is not a continued line, but a series of mountain-ranges pocketed into each other. First one mountain will take up the elevation for ten or twenty miles, and then, in its turn, some detached height will continue the broken chain, only to give place to a third, and this to others, before the Susquehanna is reached. All along its course it forms the dividing-line of States and counties. From these heights we look, for instance, into seven counties—Jefferson, Loudon, Frederick, Fauquier, and Clarke, in Virginia, and Frederick and Washington Counties, in Maryland; and into three States—Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Through all the scene the eye traces the Potomac, entering at the north, and flowing southeast; the white houses of the scattered towns, Martinsburg, Shepherdstown, Knoxville, Berlin, Hagerstown, and, on a clear day, following the road that winds over the hills—a yellow, wavy ribbon, now seen, now lost—Charlestown and Winchester. The horizon is bounded, to the north and west, by the Loudon and North Mountains, enveloped in a haze of smoky whiteness; and cultivated fields, checkered with square blocks of forest left for timber, lie as if in the hollow trough of two immense billows, whose crests are these swelling undulations of the land. The Potomac, coursing through sunlight or shade, adds beauty, and life, and changeableness. There would be a sombreness in the view that would detract much from its attractiveness with-





OLD BRIDGE AND MILL, ANTIETAM—ANTIETAM ROLLING-MILL.—BURNSIDE BRIDGE.



out this beautiful river. Some one has said that a fire is cheerful because it is a live thing in a dead room. So a river is alive, ever flowing, and ever changing. It is to a level landscape what the eye is to the human countenance—it lights it up, and gives it expression.

Through all this sweep of vision there are no signs of the ruin that war brought upon the fair Valley of Virginia. The once fenceless farms are again broken here and there into fields and pastures. Though General Sheridan boasted that a crow flying over this region would have to carry its rations in its beak—and the boast came very near being fulfilled—bounteous harvests and well-stocked barns now testify to the thrift and energy of the people. The towns have suffered, and still show the marks of the devastation, but the open country is still the same as before the armies marched and countermarched with destructive tread over its surface. What man has builded, man has destroyed, and, in many cases, utterly; but the fair and smiling fields are as eternal as the mountains that shelter and protect them.

Reluctantly we leave our breezy station, and descend by the longer way around the shoulder of the ridge overlooking the Ferry. A few moments' rest at the hospitable home of Colonel Unseld; then down the steep and tortuous road at a rattling pace; along the still waters of the canal, looked at now with a new, shuddering interest as we think and speak of the tragedy that has happened in them; by the Potomac, where Lehman was shot; over the bridge, with thoughts full of the beauties of mountain and river, and a longing like that which draws a lover to his lady's side, to see them all once again.

The evening falls among the mountains, calm and peaceful. The huge shadows of the dusky heights overcast the town and river. If it is in the season—for artists, like migratory birds, have their time for appearing in different places, and for disappearing—some wandering artist from Baltimore, Washington, or, in rarer cases, New York, may stroll in with sketching-portfolio and camp-stool, and exhibit to the wondering natives the counterfeit presentment of familiar scenes.

The night darkens, and the Ferry puts on another aspect, both novel and singularly beautiful. The mountains, dimly seen, close in upon the murmuring river and the quiet town. They rise, still sombre and black, unrelieved by a single gleam of light, and shut out the sky, except immediately overhead, or where the long reach of the river has made a break in their continuity, which the eye follows, and down which the twinkling stars, reflected in the water, glitter brightly. Along the foot of the Maryland Heights, bright, golden-rayed lights creep in slow motion. They are those that show the path of the innumerable boats that convey the freight of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal—that old, expensive, and until lately unremunerative work of internal improvement, begun under the auspices of Washington, and laboriously pushed to completion. Occasionally a skiff crosses the Potomac, its lamp casting a long, flashing, illuminated path before



it. Over the bridge, and where the perpendicular, barred, and veined rocks of the Maryland Heights come down to the river, the red signals that denote the coming of a train suddenly appear, and presently, with a rumble and jar across the bridge, the loaded cars slacken speed, stop a moment, and take up their usual hurrying, anxious, noisy crowd of passengers, many of whom have come by the Winchester and Potomac road, which connects here. Mothers, who have been sitting, the very images of patience, hastily clutch babies and bundles; those exasperating, cool persons, the experienced travellers, quietly push ahead, and, obtaining the best seats, turn over the ones next them, fill them with carpet-bags and overcoats, and coolly ignore all inquiring glances; the shrill whistle



Mill on Antietam Road.

awakens the answering echoes from the surrounding hills, and the train carries its burden westward, its long array of shining windows flashing on the river and growing dimmer and dimmer, until, all confused and blended, they disappear beyond the rounded western hills. Again the quiet is only broken by the ceaseless ripple of the Potomac, as it frets and chafes over its obstructions, and by the weirdly-musical horns of the boatmen as they play fantastic tunes, as a warning of their approach, to the keeper of the lock.

Wandering off from the Ferry by the banks of the river, by mountain-streams, often falling in graceful cascades, or pursuing their course along the indented base of



the Blue Ridge, many forest-roads present little "bits" of striking beauty dear to the eye of the artist. The road to Antietam and the battle-field of Sharpsburg is especially rich in these cabinet-pictures set in Nature's framework.

The drive is along the mountain-side from Pleasant Valley. It runs for part of the way under overhanging rocks and above deep-wooded ravines, into which foaming cascades leap, sounding in their far recesses. All along the elevated road beautiful views of mountain and valley open, ever-varying.

After the mountains are left, the Antietam gives a different scenery. Old mills border the sleepy stream—called, in the speech of the country, a "creek." Quaint stone bridges span it, and, near its juncture with the Potomac, stands the rambling, uneven range of buildings which form the Antietam Rolling-Mills.

On the road leading from Pleasant Valley and that from Boonsborough came the army of McClellan to the battle of Antietam, or Sharpsburg. These two roads are the only ones that cross the Antietam on stone bridges. The Burnside Bridge is on the Pleasant-Valley road, and here some of the most desperate fighting of the day occurred. It was on the extreme right of Lee's line. Sloping down to it are the heights of Sharpsburg. It was of almost vital importance to Lee to guard this flank. If it should be doubled up, and the Sharpsburg Height in the hands of McClellan, the Shepherdstown Ford of the Potomac would be closed to his retreat. The Confederate forces, under the command of General Toombs, held the bridge, and were supported by batteries posted on the hills in the rear. Burnside was ordered to attack and carry this bridge at all hazards. The attack was commenced at eight in the morning. From that time until mid-day the bridge was alternately in the hands of each of the opposing forces. Couriers from McClellan urged Burnside to "carry the bridge with the bayonet," and to capture and hold the height beyond. At four in the afternoon a final attack captured it. It was then too late. The command of A. P. Hill had arrived from Harper's Ferry, and the Federal advance was checked. McClellan, after the terrible fight that had continued throughout the day along the whole line, was too weak to reënforce Burnside. Thus both sides rested at nightfall. Lee then retreated by the Shepherdstown Ford into Virginia.

Harper's Ferry, long before the war brought it conspicuously to the attention of the world, had derived an extensive fame from Jefferson's description of it. This description the visitor of to-day is apt to believe exaggerated. But Jefferson's account was written before we were familiar with all the natural wonders of our land, and hence, while its beauties are very great, it is scarcely "one of the most stupendous scenes in Nature;" nor are we apt to believe a view of it "worth a voyage across the Atlantic." It must rank among the numerous striking natural beauties of our land, inferior in magnitude to many of the far Western cañons, but acquiring an interest from its historical associations, which more than compensate for its secondary place in our gallery of scenic wonders.