

17th century for local importance.

He who can remember the events of sixty years has marked greater changes in modes of living than were made in the previous two thousand years.

The world has been rapidly shrinking in size so that the daily paper contains yesterdays news from every part of it and a man in Greenfield can now send a message to the shores of the Pacific and get an answer three hours by the San Francisco clock before the message left Greenfield. He can hear and recognize the voice of a man he knows talking in New York.

The life of the Franklin County democrat who in the midst of hard times stood for sound money, or the ^Whig who drank hard cider and bawled himself hoarse for "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," differed little in outward and visible signs from the life of the men of the preceding century; their lives did not much vary from the slow existence of previous centuries. We may jump over the middle ages and the "Decline & Fall" and say that they lived much as the rural Romans did in the time of Virgil. They ate, drank and cared for their families; told old stories and lauded past times; they made journeys drawn by horses in vehicles made on the same principles, except some improvement in the springs, as the chariot that Pharaoh lost in the Red Sea;

their garments, like those of Julius Caesar, were painfully sewed by human fingers; they wrote letters by the light of oil lamps with quills, sanded the ink, folded them without an envelope, sealed them with a wafer and dropped them into mail boxes without a stamp, and looked for a reply after many days.

That was the way Valee de, Gray, Mason, Lady Lucy Montague and Byron wrote the letters that are immortal literature and helps to history. We have not improved ourselves nor our letters, we have the benefit and the disadvantages of many inventions, but in mental power, cultivation, observation, heart and character we have not advanced beyond Ben Franklin and his contemporaries. The man who remembers the slope of Greenfield sixty years ago, looking down the stage road to all the southern world, by the County buildings and sweet fields with great elms and groves of walnuts, can contrast the past and present by looking now at the sordid scene of stations and railway crossings, the long trains of freight cars, the endless switching and the clouds of choking, blackening smoke. Instead of rural sounds he will hear the shrieking of whistles, the puffing and hissing and other nerve torturing noises. He can lie awake at night in any part

of the town and hear the hills, once clothed with rock-maple, beech, chestnut and oak, now bare of forest, echoing the same hideous clamor. "Other times, other customs". The quiet Greenfield of former days, though smaller, was as well to do, and comfortable as any town of those days. It was relatively more important as the chief town of the region; the head of river navigation and the market of the farmers of all Franklin. It was notable for the manufacture of cutlery; it carried on chair and wagon making; fine cloths were woven at the "Hollow factory". Clothing, shoes and hats were made by village workmen and in many thrifty farm-houses domestic industries still had place; they sheared sheep, carded the fleece, spun yarn and wove cloth; there are men living whose tired childhood was lulled to sleep by the hum of the great spinning wheel in the evening kitchen. Every farm raised grain; the meadow farms fattened droves of steers that were driven to Brighton and the local markets were well supplied. There was a self-reliant character to the town, a continuous steady prosperity of industrious people and a cultivated society. Boats from Hartford came to Cheapside bringing sugar, molasses, rum and salt, enigmatically known

as "W. I. goods", also iron, steel, grindstones, Genesee flour, etc. The return cargoes of this commerce were lumber in various forms, farm produce and the manufactures of the region.

Great wagons covered with canvas made regular trips to Boston, with produce bringing goods to the merchants. Greenfield was on the main line of travel to the North and the point of distribution for most of the County. There was a daily line of coaches to the South and a line for Boston, leaving at midnight. In summer there was a coach to Worcester by Barre, where it stopped for dinner; it connected with the railroad to Norwich and steamboat for New York. I well remember this journey in 1842 and that I was allowed to ride on the box with Lynde, the driver, who wore a blue-tailed coat with bright buttons, a white plug-hat and yellow gloves.

At Worcester there was "tea" with cold meat and huckleberries ^{on the corner of Main and Foster streets} at the American House and the cars which left in the evening were low and small, upholstered with black haircloth. We met the steamboat at Norwich, arriving at New York in good time next morning. The ^{Greenfield} stage tavern was the present Mansion House. It had a wide piazza the full length of the front; on the

east side was the stable yard with room to turn a coach and four, backed by roomy stables. The ~~commercial~~ ^{local} interest in the stage lines was represented by Ashur Spencer, Bernard Newell and perhaps Capt. Ames and David Long who owned the great red brick blacksmith shop on Federal street; next to it was ~~Fieldy~~ ^{the} carriage and wheelwright's shop; next to that was ~~Alexander~~ ^{Allan} Root's store-house. The stage horses were shod under the eye, or by the skillful hands of "Jack" Houghton. It seemed to my boyhood that the awful fires of this region were never quenched. Amid the smoke and sparks, like Vulcan in his "stithy", I recall the stalwart form of "Sam" Stebbins, in leather armor, with naked, blackened arms, in the glory of his strength. He could shape a coach step at a single heat and when, with two strikers, he forged axel trees, the clangor of metal might have roused the sever sleepers.

These workers kept long hours. "Jack" Houghton used to rest himself in the evening by making horse nails from Norway rods. The postoffice was under the charge of an ancient democrat and solid citizen, Capt. Ambrose Ames; it was in a small, neat attachment to his house on Federal street. The work was briskly done by "Aunt" Morgan and "Aunt" Jane.

When the country was redeemed from locofoeicism for about four weeks in 1846, by the election of "the Farmer of North Bend", Richardson Hall succeeded Jefferson's postmaster and the office was moved to the new Davis block.

Capt. Ames was a reticent man, who wore a broad wing. He lived to a great age probably because he ate fried sausages for breakfast all his vigorous life; these were rolled in winter and put down in jars, as Hoggiana preserved the 37 olives, in hot fat; they came out fresh and odoriferous of sage in midsummer.

The taverns were noted for good living. There was a saying on the road, "book me for Greenfield", from the remark of a notable man who missed his accustomed comforts at a more pretentious town.

The stage house was known as Capt. Foggart's and afterwards as Col. Chase's.

It is my dim recollection that the American House was called Gilbert's tavern and was kept by Col. Wright before it became Keith's tavern, a name it held with credit for many years.

There was an eating house (the word's restaurant and saloon had not come into use) kept by Wells & Ford; they sold Albany ale, small beer, mead and served meals; in the rear they had a candy factory, where one Tolleston presided. Here was a bewildering odor of wintergreen, sassafras, peppermint, bergamot, etc. Greenfield was never noted as a dry town; indeed the open bars did a roaring trade. As the late Judge Charles Thompson said, it was the heroic age of New England when rum was six cents a glass. It never was six cents, it was "fo' pence", a thin, smooth bit of Spanish silver which was legal tender for many small comforts in those days and was worth six and a quarter cents.

Whiskey had not arrived and German beers were unknown. The common drinking was gin and Medford rum, though the more fastidious took "West Ingly."

There was a cheap French brandy marked "Saignette". A fruity odor of crushed limes and lemons pervaded the taverns and lump sugar crunched under the stout toddy stick.

The farmers from the hills used the great yard and barns of Keith's, standing in their blue, woolen frocks, unmindful of weather or western competition, talking crops and long-forgotten politics.

Political meetings were held in the town hall in Federal street. The great ^wWhig convention in the hard cider and doughnut orgy of 1840, was on Col. Spencer Roots land back of the present church and courthouse. A log cabin was built; there were coons, owls and other Whig symbols. The chief speaker was Gen. Wilson of New Hampshire. In 1844 the democrats were in the lead and they had a convention in Pine Grove; their speakers were Judge Levi Woodbury, Ben. Hallett and Mr. McArthur. At another time Caleb Cushing and Ben. Hallett spoke on the common. The Whigs had John C. Park in the town hall.

Park was a pugnacious campaigner. My father, a Webster ^wWhig, greatly rejoiced in Park and ^{wondered} how Capt. Ames, "Tom" Nims and D. W. Carpenter could have the face to sit there and hear him, forgetful that they were the very sinners vainly called to repentance.

There were other amusements than politicks; parties, picnics, sleigh rides to "Bloody Brook" and many dances in the large room of either tavern to the fiddles of Philo Temple, Charles Lyon and John Putnam. There were good lectures and occasional "concerts". Boston actors came in the summer for

their vacation and we had "The Lady of Lyons" and the almost forgotten tragedy of "Douglas". Miss Louisa Gan played "Norval". In the company were Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Smith, Mr. Spear, "Jack" Dunn, Andrews and others.

The Fourth of July was a dull day connected in my mind with Cold Water Army picnics in Pierces' Grove. The great event was the occasional "Muster". There was a militia company in nearly every town. Coleraine had a famous troupe of cavalry, well mounted and uniformed. They wore high, black leather helmets, flaring at the top, with a bright red pompon; these were made by Haerath, the Greenfield harness maker who must have been a skillful man in leather; the pattern was taken from a colored print of the capture of Warsaw, "When leagued oppression ~~passed~~ ^{passed} to Northern wars.

Her whiskered pandoors and her fierce ~~huzzars~~ ^{ssarts} . They rode their own horses and when, well loaded, they charged through "the street" towards the west the earth trembled.

Deerfield had a large company of "Cadets" with a sort of hunting shirt uniform that was very fetching. The earliest organization I remember in Greenfield was "the Artillery". It was the shabbiest company of the regiment; the armament

was two brass guns, kept in a small house north of "Jack" Pierces' farm. I doubt if anyone of social importance belonged to the artillery; the gunners were stalwart "river men", who wore white cotton frocks with eschatalogic figures on the backs. Their music was a drum and fife with a limited number of tunes apt to run into each other. Their training day was a noisy festival prolonged into the night. There was a change in the military spirit about that time.

David S. Jones was elected general of the brigade; he formed a brilliant staff, of which Charles Devens, all unconscious of his future military experience, was a member.

The colonel of the regiment was Nettleton and William Keith was major.

A smart infantry company took the place of the lumbering artillery-men.

Under these auspices there was a muster which revived the memory of the Revolution. The troops marched in from all quarters the day previous,-- a sham battle was fought on ground towards Nash's mills; one side employed a body of stealthy Indians in blankets, paint and feathers, armed with tomahawks, led by that, perhaps, forgotten savage,

George Newport. The verisimilitude was kept up by the fact that some of the Indians were left on the field, overcome by that enemy to which their race so readily yields. The great holiday after these visions of military glory was when a circus came.

The circus of sixty years ago was not a great moral show, endorsed by the crowned heads of Europe, in which the merititious features of the King are condoned by the instruction afforded in natural history by ill smelling carnivora, a herd of shambling elephants and a wilderness of monkeys, holding the mirror up to mankind.

It was the honest single ring circus; modern humbugging had not reached it. The circus has changed with the country. It was introduced from France in the time of Washington. French performers were taught to ride and tumble as soldiers learn drill; but it was an art adapted to the recklessness of American genius and was soon carried by our horsemen and athletes far beyond the capacity of the French. In grace and daring, the American performers far exceeded all others and the single ring circus rivalled the Olympian

games in beauty of forms, grouping and sustained action.

When Barnum came upon the scene the attic flavor was lost in the odor of caged beasts; there was little space to accommodate crowds of people and three rings confused the senses and despoiled criticism.

The circus became a "great show"; it was modernized and vulgarized.

In my childhood it was "summer's brightest gaud", watched, and waited for. It came in early morning procession with band chariot and a long line of variegated and cream colored horses, some of which had a flesh color and mottled spots quite different from the modest black of the Furry horse, a peculiarity which was considered an undoubted mark of Arabian blood.

There was activity at the taverns; the stable yards filled with "teams" and there was sharp noise of preparation on the selected ground where quick moving men were driving stakes, raising the centre pole and pitching the tent. Then the exciting rush for tickets while the huge canvass bellied in the breeze and the strains of the band floated on the air.

The circus owners of those days were Turner, Howe and later Rockwell and Stone and Sands & Lent. The really great man of the performance, to my boyish judgment, was the Ring-master. What dignity was in his careful dress and bearing; with what calm, commanding power he directed the gorgeous scene as if his whiplash was the wand of Prospero; with what perfect temper he bore the personal remarks, answered the impertinent questions, or moderated the exuberance of the clown, whom, in a fine rich voice, I'm addressed as "Mr. Merryman". With what lofty restraint he abstained from the weakness of a smile when the audience was shaken loose with inextinguishable laughter. When I saw the Ring-master of Howe's circus I knew what manner of man George Washington was. Then the clown, the conventional jester of a thousand years, who joked, tumbled and took liberties with the Ring-master as his medieval predecessors did with kings; venturing to ask him if he happened to have a custard pie in the pocket of his elegant dress coat, insisting that the young lady who called for the "hoops" asked for soup and like the immortal fools of Shakespeare, under the guise of his motley, gave us

grand truths and wise philosophy.

Short sayings to a speaker are like short robes to him who runs a race and the effect of the jester's wit was in its laconic character; it evoked the happy laugh of surprise and did not strain the memory.

The influence of the circus was felt long after the revels were ended and the pageant faded.

The metallic currency of those days was nearly all Spanish silver. There were Mexican dollars and the Spanish "pillar" dollar, which bore the design of the pillars of Hercules; those were not often seen. I think they bore a premium over gold. The Spanish half real, which we called "fo' pence", the real which was called "ninepence" and the two real piece which was our "quarter", worn quite smooth, were the common coins. Sometimes one saw a peseta, a Spanish coin of the 18th century, worth twenty cents; this was called a "pistareen". Copper coin was the large cent and a handful of them in a boy's pocket made him feel the embarrassment of riches.

The religious life of the town was somewhat variegated

as farm advertisements reads it was "suitably divided" between several Protestant sects. If there were Catholics they had no place of worship. The first "orthodox" meeting house was at Mashes mills, under the life-long guidance of the venerable and impressive Dr. Chandler, who being asked at a conference if there was much vital piety in his parish replied "nothing to boast of". The second Congregational was "the brick meeting house," on the ground of the present stone structure, but there were ancient elm trees about it which are not

It was the largest congregation, gathered from a wide circle, but like Paul's Athenians inclined to seek new things and frequently changing ministers. The Episcopal church under the permanent pastorate of Dr. Titus Strong, a sound divine, and good citizen, was a wooden structure on ground now occupied by the stone church built in 1847.

^{later}
This building was from a plan by the distinguished New York architect, Upjohn and the beautiful timber work of the roof was done by "Phil" Holden, a local carpenter.

The Methodists had a church on Main opposite what is now the south end of Franklin street. It was a prosperous

society. I think it had a Baptist attachment, for immersions half way between the grist mill and the Green River works were not uncommon and crowds gathered at the river. Most of the serious citizens employed at "the cutlery" were Methodists. Of all the Yorkshire men who came early to Greenfield, I do not remember any who were not dissenters, most of them going with the Methodists.

In those days there was a feeling that the world through wickedness and wear and tear was near its end and there was much excitement over a prediction of William Miller of Pittsfield that the judgment day would come in 1843. It was preached all over Western Massachusetts that repentant believers would be caught up in the air and the unrepentant, with the sin-sick earth, would be destroyed by fire.

This comfortable doctrine had belief among a credulous fringe of the community. There was a deep suspicion over the report that a prophetic hen in one of the hill towns had laid an egg bearing the legend:

"In eighteen hundred and forty-three
The end of the world will surely be."

One Hines, a travelling preacher, proved from the prophecies of Ezekiel that Miller was right and the end was at hand. The uneventful character of 1843 was a deep disappointment to people who had neglected business, spent their substance, repented of their sins and made ascension robes. They were the subject of jeers and scoffing. Of one family it was told that the wife, awakened by the winter winds, roused her husband, declaring she heard the noise of Gabriel's chariot wheels. The drowsy man bade her go to sleep for Gabriel would not come on wheels when there was good sleighing.

The Unitarians were ~~not numerous in Franklin, but they built~~ ^{increasing in numbers and} a church in a good situation before which a ~~sign~~ ^{sign} ~~number~~ said they could stand as their fellow Christians passed and say "look at that dam' you." The "foreign element" was strong in the attraction that the Green River works had for Sheffield cutlers of a superior class. They were sturdy, skillful Yorkshire men; most of them became valuable citizens, though the Bradshaw brothers returned to England and one family became Mormons and went to Nauvoo. There were several German cutlers but they did not come with families until after 1846.

There were few Irish until after the potato rot and famine.

Hugh Rafferty, a jolly, fat man was night watchman at the cutlery; his brother-in-law, James Hickey was day watchman and porter in the yard. My father said he could always tell what part of the works Hickey was in by the smell of raw onions.

In these recollections of a past glowing with the obscuring haze of happy childhood, there are some dark shadows. The old life had its problems and its troubles. In many respects there are great improvements in the detail of daily life.

Greenfield had a small minority of heathenish, native stock, that sawed wood, chopped in winter and "ran river" in summer. The river was alive with shad and "lamper" eels in the spring, when no man of this class could work; they had many children, none of whom missed their heredity. The men were of the sort described in ~~the story of~~ ^{one of Arthur Gilman's stories} one of them who was partly paid for his work in rum. On Saturday night he wanted a quart but was given a pint with the admonition that it was enough to keep Sunday. "Yes", he replied, "but how will it be kep"? These families intermarried and intensified their characteristics; a woman from one of them, who sometimes visited

our kitchen for its mistaken hospitality, was asked by my mother about one of her sisters. "Oh, Melissy, well she ~~is~~ is a keepin' about as bad a house as you could find in any sea-port town." Another whose partner was uncommonly worthless even in their circle, informed my mother that "husbands is only lent marcies." This class, for it was a class of degenerate people, were not from the so-called "scum of Europe", but from the original New England stock with good family names. I do not think any effort was put forth to improve them. They seem to have disappeared from the active towns of the state, though specimens of them can be found, not far off by those curious in sociology.

I think they faded away before the immigration of the energetic and hopeful Irish, who, though poorer had the training and care of a vigilant church and the ardent desire to improve and to raise the condition of their children to a better than their own. ~~I think, at times, I recognize them in the confidence traps, a product of this generation, or hear their echo in strange doctrines that reach us from distant parts of the country.~~ I feel quite sure that boys are better looked after and do less mischief than formerly. All young

people, I may say all people, are better nourished and more sensibly dressed and shod than in old times, owing in great part to improvement in food preparations and the vast increase of fruit and cheapness of sugar, and in the greater cheapness of all kinds of clothing.

Women had a hard lot in providing, cooking and in sewing and knitting by hand. Domestic "help", the word servant was not in use except in the Scriptures, was difficult to obtain. After the young women my mother brought to Greenfield were well married, and that was not long, she had a procession of bright daughters of farmers from the hills; they came I fancy rather to see the world: they were intelligent, read "Mr. Buckinams paper", the Tribune and Grahams and Godey's magazines, like the rest of the family and married so fast that our house was a sort of matrimonial agency.

My father had a man, Jonas Leroy, who was skillful in hunting these mountain maidens. He frequently made long excursions on the usual quest, once going as far as Savoy returning with a black-eyed girl of the Susan Nipper variety from "Cuttin Holler". But it was not long before the Irish girls came to relieve the household strain and make

life more comfortable. I am often told that schools are much better than formerly. Perhaps they are. I wish they gave more attention to instruction in the English language and literature. My recollections include one teacher happily still living, whose gentle manners, sweet face and devotion to her duty, persuaded one idle, dreaming boy to a measure of industry. I think a larger proportion of boys and girls were sent to private schools and away from home to Academies. In 1846 I was one of seven Greenfield boys at Williston Seminary. The next year my father took me to Bridgeport, to the private school kept by Henry Jones. The only public conveyance from New Haven to Bridgeport was a coach which ran three times a week. To save time we took a pair of horses and a driver. Surely times have changed on that line! Among the teachers at Greenfield in my day were Mr. Mitchell from Commington, Pliny Fisk, Mr. Atkinson, who had an excellent school in the wing, long ago removed, of Mr. Hollister's house. Mr. Upton, at a later day, taught at the "Wollenberg" school building. He gave no lessons. I think he was accomplished and I know he was patient.

The sanitary condition of American towns sixty years

ago, and much later, may be recalled by the traveller in some parts of the Turkish dominions. No place could be better calculated for drainage than Greenfield, but in former times every autumn there was typhoid fever. It was a scourge that carried off whole families. It was not so bad in the village as on thrifty meadow farms, because, as I now see it, a large part of the village was supplied with water from a pipe log aqueduct managed by that sententious philosopher, Peter Sprague, who usually prefaced his conversation with the saying "there's a thousand things to every thing". Our family never had a case of typhoid. We had an aqueduct from a safe spring.

The fever was supposed by many to be a visitation of God's wrath, and by others to result from decaying vegetation in the late rains. No one thought of tracing it to lack of drainage and the inevitable pollution of the moss covered bucket which dripping with the coldness of death arose from the well.

Cities were no better off. Boston had neither water nor sewers. New York had water, but was not half seared and I have seen pigs wandering in the streets eating garbage thrown out by housekeepers.