

# In Search Of Mrs. J.G. Smith

*Author of  
Angels and Women*



# ***In Search Of Mrs. J.G. Smith***

**O**ne thing that most people will agree on is this, we all like mysteries, whether we figure out the ending or not, our attention is glued to the book, movie, or story being told. Well I have been part of a mystery that's been ongoing for over 20 yrs. and I finally figured out the ending, but even more important the beginning.

This is really a story about a story!

**I**n the fall of 1978 my wife and I had the opportunity to provide home care for an elderly woman named Edith Brenisen living on 29 Church St in Holliston, Massachusetts.

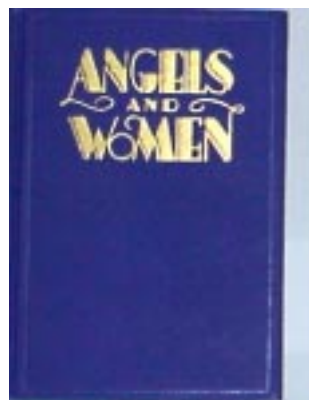
Our time living with Mrs. Brenisen was brief due to the fact she would soon be moving to New York State. One day as we were helping her move some items around in her home she directed me to the basement and said there was a box there that I could have. I went down to the basement and came upon an odd shaped slender box that was about two feet high. I opened the box and found a dozen or so royal blue books with a gold title called *Angels and Women*, so being the curious individual that I am the first thing I



***29 Church Street,  
Holliston, MA***

did was open the book and look for the publishing date of the book, it was 1924. As far as I could tell this was the first time these books have seen daylight since they were first boxed in 1924.

For fifty four years these books have been sitting patiently in this box waiting for their day to be released from darkness. So they thought!



I took the case of books home and put it on my porch, where they stayed until it was time to do some spring cleaning. Not being really interested in the subject matter at the time, I took a couple books out of the case and threw the rest of them away! Nothing like making a rare book even rarer! At least two of the books would have their day of release.

Some time after, I lent a copy of the book out for a friend to read and she said she really enjoyed it and suggested I read it.

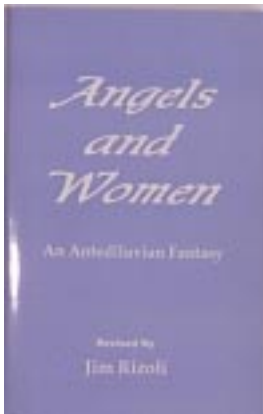
Eventually I got around to reading the book and was truly fascinated by it.

The story was a combination of Indiana Jones, Romeo and Juliet and the Last days of Pompeii all into one.

Since there are few copies if any, of the book around I thought if I ever had the time I would like to revise and republish the book for others to read and enjoy.

So one day in 1997 I was, for lack of a better word, “inspired” to start my mission revising and editing my original copy.

You might say why didn't I just leave it like it was? The original book was written in the old archaic language of the time, lots of thee's, thou's, etc, and there were terminologies and words in it that people would have a hard time understanding today. I



wanted the book to appeal to young and old.

I literally had to use a dictionary to translate some of the words, it was time consuming but interesting. This did not alter the main story.

My next step was figuring out how to get it published, so I subscribed to a magazine that catered to writers and book publishers.

I called a few up that advertised in the magazine and found one that would do it for me for a reasonable cost. The only problem was I had to order 400 books! That's a lot of books considering I had no market to sell them in.

How would I get people to find out about the book? I eventually would turn to the Internet to help me in this matter. I posted the book on some bulletin boards and found some kind folks who would list my book on their website for free. Free is good when you need cheap advertising. With this global exposure orders started coming in slow but sure.

Since then, I've sent out quite a few copies of the book to people all over the world. I had one person order 15 books!

The book has found its way to England, Australia, Sweden, and all over the United States to name a few places. Just last year (2000) I presented the book to an Internet publishing company that prints books on demand, which basically means the book is printed when a person orders it. This way they don't have to stockpile the book, which can be a waste of money for them especially, if not many people order it.

The book can now be ordered on any of the major bookseller sites like Amazon, Borders etc. The Wal-Mart book site did have the

cheapest price though, LOL, Do you think I get the book free? No Way! I have to pay like everyone else.

The response to the book has been excellent, in fact if you get onto the Amazon site and do a search for *Angels And Women* the book will come up and you can read a few of the reviews so far the comments have been all positive (5 stars.)

People have even written to me personally saying how much they have enjoyed the book and thanking me that I took the time to republish it.

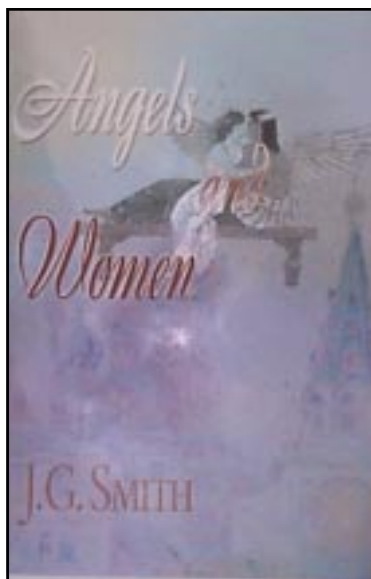
In fact I have a stack of letters and notes from interested ones who have made nice comments about the book.

But that story is just beginning; the woman who initially wrote the book is now, for me, the main story!

You see, I really didn't think Mrs. Smith existed and I thought someone just used a pen name and wrote the book. I felt like I hit a stone wall because information out there on this woman was next to nil. Can you imagine doing a genealogy search on the name Smith, not even knowing the city or town the person your looking for lived!

Things were about to change! About a month ago [Feb 2002] I was doing some searching on the web on anything relating to Mrs. Smith or the book *Seola*, which was the original title of the book *Angels and Women* prior to 1924.

I did a search for the word *Seola*, and lo and behold I got a hit! It took me to this site <http://www.zoomnet.net/~wbagnall/>



[byn/byingtonj.html](#) which had to do with an interesting man named Ezra Byington who was a minister and preached for a time in 1862 in St. Albans, Vermont, the home town of you guessed it Miss Ann Eliza Brainerd (later Mrs. J. G. Smith), the writer of the novel *Seola* (revised in 1924 as *Angels and Women*).

I finally found what I was looking for, Mrs. J. G. Smith was real and actually lived and died in St. Albans Vermont. After a few phone calls I was put in touch with the St. Albans Historical Society and they confirmed for me what I just stumbled upon. I was then provided with a good amount of information from Historical Society member Don Miner who helps out with research in St Albans.

With the information he provided I was able to piece together the puzzle that's been eluding me for these past 20 plus yrs.

The history behind this woman is quite remarkable and I hope that by providing this for you it might be somewhat encouraging and inspiring as it was for me.

I'll start with her husband Mr. Smith since he is better known because of his business ventures and political ties.

## ***Mr. Smith's Biographical Sketch***

**J** (John) Gregory Smith was born in St. Albans, Vermont, July 22, 1818, the son of John and Maria (Curtis) Smith. He attended the University of Vermont and Yale Law School, and was admitted to the Vermont bar in 1842. His father was a lawyer who was actively involved in the expansion of the railroads in Vermont and J. Gregory joined him both in the practice of law and railroad management.

John Smith was on the board of the Vermont Central Railroad, a railroad chartered in 1843 and headquartered in Northfield, and was president of the Vermont and Canada Railroad, which he had started in 1845 to eventually connect the Vermont Central Railroad with Montreal. Upon his father's death in 1858, J. Gregory Smith became president of the Vermont Central Railroad and his brother, Worthington C. Smith, was named president of the Vermont and Canada. The Central Vermont Railroad was organized in 1873 and assumed management of both the Vermont Central and Vermont and Canada Railroads. In 1883 the Consolidated Railroad of Vermont was formed to purchase the Vermont Central and Vermont and Canada property, and immediately leased it to the Central Vermont Railroad thereby consolidating the Smith family's railroad holdings. The family expanded their holdings to include related industries such as the St. Albans Foundry, the National Car Company, and its subsidiary the Vermont Iron and Car Company.

While expanding his holdings in Vermont and the northeast, J. Gregory Smith became interested in the idea of a railroad to the west and became president of the Northern Pacific Railroad

Company in 1866, a position he held until 1872.

Smith was also active in politics and was elected to the state senate in 1858 and 1859. In 1860, 1861, and 1862 he was elected to the House as a representative of St. Albans, and served as speaker of the House. In 1863 Smith was elected governor and served two terms before retiring to devote time to his duties as the president of Central Vermont and the Northern Pacific Railroad.

J. Gregory Smith married Ann Eliza Brainerd of St. Albans in 1842 and together they had six children: George Gregory (married Frances Lewis), Edward Curtis (married Anna B. James), Lawrence (died in infancy), Annie B., Julia B. (married Oliver Stevens), Helen L. (married D. Sage Mackay). Smith died November 6, 1891.

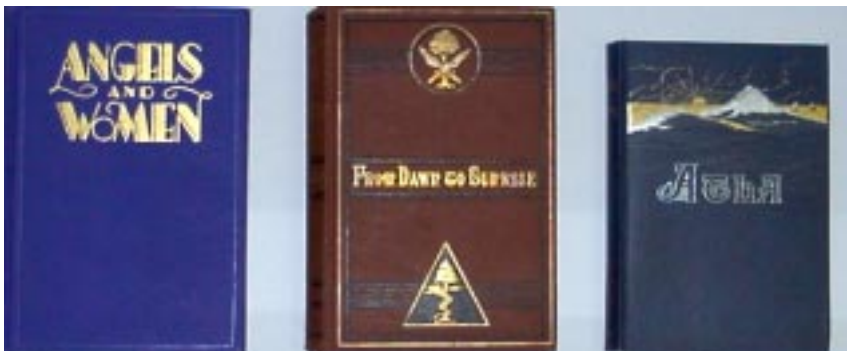
Now we know a little about her husband and family lets find what we know about Mrs. Smith.

## ***Mrs. Smiths background and accomplishments***

If you take her lineage to the beginning it would take you to John Alden of the original Plymouth Rock colony and tenth in descent from the famous Sir Francis Cook.

Mrs. Smith was the eldest of twelve children of Lawrence Brainerd and his wife, Fidelia B. Gadcombe, and was born in St. Albans, October 7, 1819. Of her brothers and sisters four boys lived to maturity and four died in infancy or youth; two girls lived to womanhood and two died at an early age.

Mrs. Smith loved to write and was the author of numerous essays, poems, and miscellaneous writings and of four works "Dawn to Sunrise," a collection of essays on religious topics, and three novels, "*Seola*," "*Selma*," and "*Atla*." Her writings were not only received with much popular favor but won for her the friendship and intimate correspondence of Dr. John Lord who was well known at that time, and other distinguished men of letters and scholars. She was often invited to address societies and social gatherings of various kinds and to read original papers and essays



before them, and was widely known throughout New England by reason of this public service. She also wrote a paper on "Reminiscences of Early Vermont" which I will include later on.

Henry K. Adams who wrote the book, *A Centennial History Of St. Albans Vermont*, said of the book *From Dawn To Sunrise* it was "the smartest book ever written in Vermont".

I have now in my possession three of her books, *From Dawn to Sunrise*, *Atla*, and *Angels and Women* (the 1924 revision of *Seola*) and her Personal Reminiscences article.

I'm still looking for the original book *Seola* but haven't had any luck as of now.

Mrs. Smith was a veteran traveler even up to an advanced age and had in the course of her busy life made five trips to Europe and had also visited Egypt, to say nothing of making frequent journeys about this continent which she had covered from its extremes north to south, east to west, including Mexico and the West Indies.

She was actively interested in the woman's sphere of public life in St. Albans and had been president of the board of managers of the Warner Home for Little Wanderers since the foundation of that institution. She was a member of the First Congregational Church and Society and a worker in its Sunday school, having taught a class of students with more or less regularity up to within a short time of her death. She was president of the board of managers for, the Vermont woman's exhibit at the Centennial exposition of 1876 at Philadelphia and was frequently chosen in similar capacities as a representative Vermont woman and one of the most distinguished daughters of the state.

Mrs. Smith's own unusual personal talents as well as her proud opportunity as wife of one governor and mother of another

brought her active career into a degree of prominence before the public that rarely falls to the lot of woman in the home life of old New England. And the charm of all this distinction that came to her was that it was the simple, natural evolution of the noble attributes of a true womanly, wifely, motherly character, with never a trace in it of that self-seeking that too often tempts woman from her fireside.

In all her long married life, Mrs. Smith was first the loving mother of her household, and its ties and interests centered in her heart. The daughter of a pioneer Abolitionist of note, a brave and daring champion of a then feeble cause, she was nurtured from infancy in the precepts of that sturdy faith in the ideals of American liberty which her devoted nature throughout all her four score and more years of useful life never forsook. Her father was one of the promoters of the famous "Underground Railroad" by which escaped slaves from the South were helped to freedom across the Canada line, and his house was one of the stations in the black man's journey to freedom. Familiar from girlhood with such scenes as transpired in this adventurous and holy work, it was but an easy and natural transition for her to assume in the maturity of her womanhood the responsibilities of helpmeet to Vermont's distinguished war governor. Throughout the dark years of the Civil War, she held up the right hand of her patriot husband in the noble discharge of weighty responsibilities and even came herself to figure in a gallant episode that served to bring out yet another phase of the splendid instincts and heroic determination of her Americanism.

# *The Famous St. Albans Raid*

**T**he Civil War was going strong and Confederacy was in need of money, and also wanted to stir up trouble between the United States and Canada, a combination that made Vermont the scene of the only Confederate military action in New England.

It all came to a head on Wednesday October 9<sup>th</sup> 1864 a day when the people of St Albans, Vermont were most likely thinking of hunting and relaxing with the hope that the war would soon be over.

There was not even a hint of trouble even though the number of visitors who were registered at the local hotels were more than usual for that time of year and no one paid much attention to the fact that some of the strangers in the town spoke with Southern accents.

The plot was simple Bennett Young and twenty-five of his confederate men would arrive in town in small groups of twos and threes from Montreal, posing as salesmen and horse-buyers, to rob the banks.

They figured they would make their move late in the afternoon when bank clerks were tired and not too alert and few people would be on the streets.

Young stepped to the porch of his hotel and shouted, "In the name of the Confederate States, I take possession of St. Albans."

Those who were unlucky enough to be on the streets were held at gunpoint, and watched in astonishment as the raiders entered the three banks in the town and rode away with \$200,000 towards Canada, a small fortune in those days!

Luckily no bank employees were killed, but a stranger in

town was hit by a stray bullet and died while another man, was wounded. They were chased to the Canadian border but the raiders got away, dropping some of the money along the way.

Some time later, the men and the remainder of the money were seized by the Canadian government, and after a long time the banks got some of the money back. The end of the war came before the two governments reached an agreement over what to do about the fugitives, the raiders were not punished enough to suit the people of St. Albans.

## ***Mrs. Smith defends the homestead***

**W**hen all this was starting to happen Mrs. Smith's eldest son was away at school, the youngest away at play, the male servants were not at home, and only her young daughters, one an infant in arms, and the servant girls were on the premises.

Her husband was in Montpelier carrying out his duties as Governor, most likely worried on hearing news of the raid thinking the worse as rumors spread, that the city was destroyed by the Confederates.

Mrs. Smith on the other hand, with the characteristic resolution and courage of the pioneer blood that leaped in her veins, set about preparations for the defense of the executive mansion. The pride of the state of Vermont was involved in it, and no less the instinct of the mother fighting for her hearthstone. Summoning her servant girls, she closed every blind and shade and bolted every door but the front one.

As she herself afterward related, her first impulse was to run up the flag that if she and her little garrison went down it might be with flying colors, but realizing the rashness of such an act she desisted. Then she began a search for weapons which resulted in her finding an old horse-pistol but no powder or bullets. Hardly was this in her hand when a horseman was seen galloping furiously up the hill, and, thinking this was the advance of the raiders, the plucky woman took her post on the front steps of the house with the empty revolver in her hand, determined to accomplish by daring and strategy what could not be done by force.

But, fortunately the horseman turned out to be her brother-

in-law, Lieutenant, F. Stewart Stranahan, an aide on the staff of the General Custer and at the time home on sick leave. He informed her that the rebels had come part way up the hill with the intention of firing on the Governor's mansion, but; fearing the loss of their plunder from the banks if they delayed too long had turned back and were then on their way to Sheldon.

Parties of pursuers were then being organized by the townspeople and Mrs. Smith gave up to Lieutenant Stranahan her pistol and emptied her stables of horses that the party might have mounts. Returning to the house she discovered one of the girls had found a rifle, and, with this on her shoulder, the noble woman started for the village and turned it over to the first man she met that was preparing to pursue the fleeing raiders. From this day through the exciting days that followed, while for nine months the governor's residence was guarded by armed sentinels, the brave woman did her part in the nerve-straining drama of war time as her grandmothers had done when they molded bullets and loaded muskets and fought side by side with their husbands against the Indians in the log cabin in the forests of long ago.

For her conspicuous patriotic service in this respect; and in recognition of her inspiring example to patriotic Vermont womanhood, Mrs. Smith was paid the unique honor of being commissioned colonel-by-brevet on the staff of Gov. Peter T. Washburn.

Then there was the gender strain of devotion to duty in her life that ministered in her household and sent out from the hearthstone such influences for good as only the wife and mother know, influences and ministry too sacred to her loved ones to be dwelt upon in the public print. Blessed with strong, alert; and gifted mental powers, her mind literally dominated her body and

helped her to continue a life of active usefulness to her family and the world long after she had passed the allotted age of man. Her vitality was remarkable, and the charm of her old age was the warmth, hopefulness, vivacity, and refreshing youthfulness of a ripe old mind that made her almost the youngest and the cheeriest of her family circle at the same time that her wealth of mellowed wisdom was the refuge of them all.

*(St. Albans Daily Messenger; Friday, January 6, 1905, page 1.)*

## ***What about Brainerd, Minnesota?***

**S**ince her husband had a lot to do with bringing the railroad to the West there was a belief by some that the City of Brainerd Minnesota was named after Mrs. Smith (her maiden name). So I did some research and contacted Lucille Kirkeby who lives in the town of Brainerd.

She was kind enough to send me among other things a letter dated February 25, 1971 written from Carl Zapffe who was a well known historian of the area, he wrote this to Mr. John Stensrud then President of the Crow Wing Historical Society.

“ In short, our City of Brainerd was not named after Mrs. J. Gregory Smith, but rather after her father Lawrence Brainerd, one-time Governor of Vermont and the head of numerous Vermont railroading enterprises. He had been the one responsible for employing “young J. Gregory Smith”, who then later married Brainerd’s daughter. In the very month of May 1870 that the Congress of the United States approved the Northern Pacific

Railroad Company as Grantee “of certain lands situated in the State of Minnesota for the purposes mentioned,” and at the very time that J. Gregory Smith was leaving his wife in the East in order to join that canoe party that made the fatal decision on the location of The Crossing; Lawrence Brainerd died.

A son of the Smiths by name of Lawrence Brainerd Smith had also died previously, a namesake of the ex-Governor; and therefore at this time of tragedy in the East and discovery in the West, with Thomas Canfield the President of the L.S.P.S. Co. in charge of laying out and naming town sites, and J. G. Smith President of the N.P.R.R. responsible for locating the spot that would naturally become a town site, an agreement easily followed to name the two sides of the river Lawrence Brainerd, with the main family name on the main side of the river. I do not yet have an actual definitive record of what went on between these parties in the course of choosing the names, but I do have record that the names were chosen.

Personal discussion with the grandson, James Gregory Smith, finds him in complete agreement with the supposition that it was named after his great grandfather directly, involving his grandmother only indirectly. Particularly at that time of intense sorrow over her father’s death and he was by all means the commanding figure in the Brainerd lineage for some generations we both feel that the naming of the new town sites after Mrs. Smith’s father was meant as a solace to her, and a salute to the great former friend and sponsor of Smith himself.”

It seems very unlikely that Mrs. Smith was ever in Brainerd.

## ***Some of Mrs. Smith's writings***

*Here is an article written by Mrs. Smith that was published in the St Albans Daily messenger in 1924. After reading this you will appreciate how easy we have it today.*

### ***Personal Reminiscences of Early Life in Vermont***

*(By Mrs. J. Gregory Smith)*

Published in the St. Albans Daily Messenger,  
starting November 22 1924

*'it all comes back from the dusk of time  
With floating cadence and swell of rhyme  
That is half remembered still,  
Like a measure of some forgotten strain  
That hauntingly comes and flees again  
My musing soul to thrill.'*

I first opened my wondering eyes, for this incarnation, 85 years ago in a small brown cottage on the main street of the village of St. Albans, Vermont. A few similar structures were then in existence and all were of the humblest description, protected by fences enclosing the grounds, for cattle were allowed to run in the streets and many a poor man pastured his cow in the "long lane" as the roadways were termed. Our front yard, entered through a gate closed by a ball chain, was adorned with lilac, rose, and snowball

bushes, and a plum tree. A row of Lombardy poplars “threw their shadows” not “across an ancient portico” for there was none, but on a sidewalk devoid of plank or paving.

North of the front yard were four magnificent “tame” cherry trees and a row of red currant bushes. Beyond was a flower garden where pinks, poppies, sweet Williams, tiger lilies, caraway and fennel grew. West of the garden was a grand apple orchard yielding hundreds of bushels of fruit; in the spring rosy with blossoms, resonant with murmuring bees and singing birds and in autumn red, golden and russet with the perfect apples. No caterpillar, curculio, or potato bug obtruded their obnoxious presence in those primeval days. It was not only an orchard but a park and pleasure ground.

*“Here groups of merry children played,  
Here youths and maidens dreaming strayed.”*

A forest and swamp screened the orchard on the west where tall hemlocks waved their spectral arms and a great brook flowed noisy with clamorous frogs. The cry of the bittern and loon and sometimes the bark of a fox might be heard. One dark night my small brother and my father’s clerk were coming up the street when a large animal jumped from a tree on the roadside and ran into the west woods screeching as only a panther could do.

Our house was small and simple. The front room or parlor was, I suppose, fifteen or twenty feet square. An ingrain carpet covered the floor. There were chairs, a “light stand” and a table over which hung a “looking glass.” There were no mirrors in those days. The bedrooms were just large enough to contain furniture absolutely necessary; ceilings were eight feet high; windowpanes

seven by nine inches; no stoves or furnaces, fireplaces filled with logs in cold weather scorched our faces while our backs were frozen.

No ranges in the kitchen; a huge fire place with a crane for kettles, a tin baker with a spit to roast meat, a brick oven large enough to hold a week's supply of baking, a covered iron pan on legs, heated by coals for emergency cakes or biscuits — these comprised the kitchen furniture. Saturday was baking day. The brick oven was heated by wood burned to coals. These were raked out and when the cook could hold her hand inside long enough to count thirty (a dubious thermometer) the bread, pies, cake and cookies were pushed in on an iron shovel, an iron door was closed and a wooden one covered it. The proper moment for release was guessed at (the cook becoming expert in the idea of duration) the products of her skill were withdrawn and stored in cupboards or on shelves. I must not forget the breakfast; Johnnycake made so stiff with meal and water that it could lie slanted upon a hard wood board and roast before the fire.

Monday was washing day. This work was done in the woodshed during warm weather and in the kitchen during winter. Rainwater was caught in barrels or hogsheads at the corners of the house conveyed from the roof in wooden eaves troughs. If the water froze during a cold winter snap, the men brought snow in baskets which was melted for use, making steamy, chilly, sneezy kitchens. Water for drinking and Culinary purposes were drawn from wells by means of a sweep and bucket. Wood from the surrounding forests was superabundant. It was hauled sled length into the back yards, chopped or sawn into proper proportions, split and stored in ample sheds.

As there were no matches, to preserve the fire the ashes were drawn out on the kitchen hearth at bedtime, a back log was placed on the hot bricks, coals were thrown on it and ashes heaped over all. In the morning it was raked open, and fires were built from the bed of coals. In case this method failed a sheet iron fireman with a long handle was taken to a neighbor's and a few coals borrowed. If none thus were to be had, resort to the tinderbox was the last expedient. A few strokes of iron on a flint brought sparks by which a piece of rotten wood (punk it was called) ignited, and fire was thus produced.

There was no market. Almost everybody raised swine and potatoes. The more enterprising cultivated wheat, rye, maize, fruit and vegetables. They had horses, oxen, cows, sheep, and fowls, which were shared with their neighbors for a consideration, sometimes money, but more often labor or barter. From the tallow of bee's candles were made. I can remember feeling quite old and important while cutting the wicks the proper length, twisting them double over wooden rods, dipping them in a kettle or tub of melted tallow, and suspending them on the back of two chairs to drip, repeating this process till the right size was obtained. When quite cold and hard they were laid away in boxes. Some pretentious families used whale oil lamps. The scraps of tallow and lard were made into soft soap by heating in the lye of wood ashes. Six or eight barrels of this commodity always stood in one of our outhouses.

Land was to be had almost for the clearing. Fish abounded in the lakes and streams. Beef, mutton, pork, and veal, when not eaten fresh were salted. Grain was taken to mills run by waterpower and ground into flour. Apples were pared, cored, and strung on a cord to dry for sauce and pies.

Almost all the necessaries of life were kept in bulk, and a man whose cellar and storehouse were full was called “a good provider.”

The wool of sheep was carded, spun, and woven by hand, sometimes sent to mills and manufactured into fulled cloth for men’s wear and pressed smooth for women’s and children’s gowns or made into flannel for sheets, blankets, and under-garments. How pleased we were to get our one new maroon or brown woolen gown for winter’s use!

An expert woman was hired extra to card wool into rolls and spin stocking yarn. I loved the clank of a handloom and the buzz of a spinning wheel, but spoiled many a roll trying in vain to draw out an even thread - it would be a number sixty in one part and a number ten in another. However, I could reel it off double for twisting. This yarn knit into socks or stockings was often colored in a dye made by soaking in vinegar the purple paper that came wrapped around white sugar loaves. Other homemade dyes we used, warm and durable these stocking were.

Oh, the plenty and profusion of the “well-to-do” in those times! Shelves laden with blankets, flannel and stocking yarn, great shed piled full of winter logs, bins of flour and mead, barrels of apples and cider, beef, pork, and sugar, boxes of tea, bags of coffee, tubs of lard and home-churned butter, cakes and tubs of maple sugar, “a land flowing with milk and honey” - this latter sweet often found stored by busy bees in hollow trunks of trees and ruthlessly appropriated by rapacious man.

All this for the industrious, provident managers, such my parents were, and not for themselves alone. They were eminently hospitable. My father’s impecunious relatives and many poor homeless waifs were pensioners on their bounty. I remember their

protracted visits of weeks and months while they were fed, warmed, and clothed. Some were ill, others disagreeable, but all were welcome notwithstanding my mother's large family of little children and servants, for all work people (men and women) were taken care of in the house.

Another indication of the moral and religious atmosphere of our home could be seen in what was called the "Charity Box." It was of white wood, about seven inches long, decorated with flowers and sentiments written on the top, sides and ends, and varnished to preserve them. There was a slot in the cover large enough to admit a silver dollar. I remember most of the sentiments.

*'There is that scattereth and yet increaseth. There is that withholdeth more than is meet and yet tendeth to poverty.'*

*'Give not grudgingly nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.'*  
*'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.'*

*'That man may last but never lives who much receives but nothing gives.'*

The unseen motto on the walls seemed to be, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

Were they impoverished by such generosity? Nay, the promise was fulfilled, "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over." They prospered from plenty to profusion, from competence to wealth. Grandfather Aldis and his family were equally benevolent.

Ready-made clothing was unknown. All sewing was done by hand. Little girls were taught to sew and knit at a very early age and compelled to do stints. My mother was severely censured because I could not sew till I was ten years old. Her defense was

that the study of the Bible and schoolbooks was more important.

Tailoring was often done in the house, but when old shoes needed mending or new ones were required we went to the shoemaker, who rose from his low bench, threw off his leathern apron, and measured our feet, manufacturing a clumsy pair which was never delivered at the time promised, not that a shoemaker's word became a proverb of reproach.

Headgear was equally primitive. There was a village hatter for men and a milliner for women. Bonnets were sometimes brought from the cities by merchants in later years. I remember the Leghorn flats, Tuscan braids, and Levantine silks in my father's store. The very stylish would send by merchants for city-made articles. A ludicrous accident happened to a twenty-dollar bonnet Uncle William Gadcombe brought from New York for Aunt Miranda Aldis. She was the heiress and belle of St. Albans, bright and intellectual, but precise and finical. The bonnet had just arrived and after received due admiration was left in an open bandbox on a bureau in the front chamber, and long streamers unfortunately dangling to the floor. Aunt Miranda looked out into the orchard one morning and saw some unusual object, possibly the puppy, cavorting through the grass and round the trees, and being nearsighted she called out, "Mary what is the matter with Rover, is he in a fit? His head is in an awful shape." Mary screamed, "He has got your New York bonnet! He has put his head through the crown and is pawing frantically to tear off the brim, part of which is already under his fore legs!"

Rover was caught, and the fragments of that costly headgear were gathered up in ruins. The dog had evidently been prowling around the chamber, and seizing the ribbons pulled down the bandbox, appropriated the contents, and had a beautiful frolic with

the wrecked fabric. The wrath and dismay of the owner is better imagined than described.

The pharmacopoeia of those days was exceedingly simple. I often saw in grandmother's kitchen the lining of chickens' gizzards drying on plates and was told "when powdered they are good for a sick stomach." The same remedy is now prepared in medical laboratories and labeled "Ingluvin." I saw frequently in the same place a bowl of clear water into which live wood coals had been dropped, making a delicate white lye for acidity of the stomach. Herbs were gathered when in blossom, catnip for nervous babies, the mints, thoroughwort, tansy, rue, sage, and caraway seeds for decoctions and flavors. Burdock, yellow-dock, spikenard, and dandelion roots, spruce twigs, and wintergreen leaves were gathered for beer and to cleanse the blood. No good housekeeper was deficient in these remedies stored away on the rafters of chamber or garret. Camphor, paregoric, and opodeldoc were kept in the medicine cupboard. A doctor was called in only for surgical or extreme cases.

Tobacco was greatly in vogue. Huge pressed plugs, as they were called, for men and snuff for women. Snuff was of the two kinds - Scotch and Maccaboy. Small boxes, more or less elaborate, were used for this popular commodity in which a vanilla bean was kept for perfumery. A very favorite gift was an ornamental snuffbox.

Merchants went to New York twice a year for dry goods, groceries, and West Indian productions, sugar, molasses, and rum. These last were advertised by great iron letters 'W. I.' hung high on the outside walls of the stores. My father being a rigid teetotaler did not bring the rum. Upon one occasion when he returned from New York he brought some tiny bottles of phosphor into which a

wooden stick could be thrust and whirled rapidly, producing a flame sufficient to light a candle. This was kept on a high shelf lest the children should be poisoned by it. It was the first attempt at friction matches. He also brought small disks of cork with a waxed wick which when placed in bowl of lamp oil and lighted would burn all night, greatly to the comfort of my mother in the care of her numerous small children.

When it was necessary to go out on dark nights a lighted candle in a perforated tin lantern was used. If this were forgotten, uncomfortable accidents would sometimes occur; people would collide or run into quagmires or trees. One moonless, cloudy night, when my father had forgotten to take his lantern, he remained late at the store pasting his books. In going home it was so dark he could not see his hand before his face and in passing under the dense shadow of trees on the sidewalk devoid of plank or paving he suddenly stumbled and fell upon some large soft object. To his dismay the huge mass began to rise, and he had quite a circus performance to disengage himself and preserve his equilibrium. It seems that a cow had taken this sheltered place for her stable that night.

In those days it was difficult to get hired help, and kind neighbors gathered in barns to assist each other in husking corn, and merriment was great when the lucky red ear was found. They also gathered in kitchens for mutual aid in apple paring, and women often assembled in the largest rooms of the houses for quilting bees. A bed quilt lining, batting and cover were basted on a huge frame; a row of quilters sat on each side, and there was a generous rivalry to be first ready to roll the finished work under. Ladies also met to sew for the poor. Such associations were called "Dorcas Societies" We were not, as I remember, open to the charge of gossip of scandal.

Feather beds, not mattresses, were the rule. The young wife must have at least three to begin housekeeping. These beds were uncomfortable, unwholesome, difficult to adjust in making up, but warm on winter nights in furnace less houses, and a safe resort during thunder-storms. Covered brass pans with a long wooden handle were filled with coals and quickly passed over the beds of persons ill or feeble to take off the chill.

The raising of buildings was effected in the same mutual aid manner. A large number of men invited to assemble at a given time on the premises where a building was to be erected. The timbers, previously made ready by carpenters, were seized by as many hands as could conveniently hold them and lifted into place by jerks that followed the "heave ho" of the foreman. Upon these "raising" occasions it was the custom to furnish an unlimited supply of rum as a reward for the gratuitous service.

A large barn was to be erected upon one of my father's farms, and knowing that evil consequences were the result of this indiscriminate use of intoxicants he determined to make a new departure and furnish a generous luncheon as a substitute. The plan succeeded admirably the frame went up without accident, drunkenness or brawl, everybody was satisfied. An undeveloped, inglorious Milton celebrated the event: 'Here is a fine frame that was raised without ruin, It pleases me well to see how the 'jints' come, May the Lord bless the owner, the carpenters also, And Brooks (the farmer) if he covers it to keep out the snow.

In those days there were no methods of extinguishing fires, except by bucket brigade; cisterns, wells, and perchance natural streams were the only water supply. Fire would break out in the forests and endanger the settlements. During a protracted drought

St. Albans was once thus imperiled. A council was held to devise means for its protection. A native genius, perhaps the author of the foregoing poem (the construction warrants such a supposition) composed a verse, which may serve as its companion piece:

*'St. Albans, St. Albans, St. Albans, Oh why~  
The fountains have failed, the springs are all dry, And you are asleep  
prepared to weep, For the cry is heard that the fire is nigh.'*

Although servants, mechanics, and all hired labor were difficult to procure, wages were very low. I don't remember what was paid men, but woman's help was 75 cents a week for kitchen girls, who could do washing, ironing, and cooking. As late as 1844, when I began housekeeping, I paid the very highest price, one dollar a week and no day off.

I remember when a public coach came into town about 11 o'clock a.m., I think twice a week, its approach heralded by the tooting of a tin horn. People hurried to the tavern (there were no hotels then) to get the news. In after years a steamboat plied between St. Albans Bay and Burlington owned by the Champlain Transportation Company of which my father, Lawrence Brainerd, then become a man prominent in business and politics, was President.

A newspaper was published in our town, the St. Albans Repertory, edited and printed by one Jeduthan Spooner in the basement of his own house. It was issued weekly, and articles not copied were headed "Original." Now we demand a morning and evening paper, delivery of letters daily, if not oftener.

Letter postage in those days was 18 cents to Troy, 25 cents to New York. Now it is carried to the remote bounds of our territory and to Canada for two cents.

I do not know when I learned to read, but I can even now see in imagination the little schoolroom where Miss Cooley, a pious Methodist old maid, taught us from a primer. Saturday afternoon was holiday, and if we had been good scholars through the week we were presented with a certificate (so called). It was a slip of paper on which was written "This may certify that. (the name) by good behavior and diligent attention to study merits the approbation of the teacher. Ruth Cooley' Proud and happy we were to exhibit our certificates to the admiring gaze of our parents who carefully stored them away.

At the close of the term the scholars were presented with a little book. How well I remember we highly prized one entitled "Old Grandpapa and Other Poems." I can repeat some of these now after the lapse of 75 years! Parents can hardly realize the influence of impressions made before children are ten years old.

I was allowed free access to Grandfather Aldis's library, or "office" it was called. How well I remember the plain, well-filled bookcases, the open Franklin stove with a wood fire, and the chilly blast that met us when we passed through an entry to the dining room! I remember Grandpa's arm-chair, his huge wooden spittoon, and Grandma's rocker - above all the little low bench-like stool where I sat for hours unmolested poring over the broad pages of an illustrated Cyclopedia, reading of lions, tigers, elephants, serpents~ and other wild creatures; also studying a small history of the Old Testament illustrated with wood cuts. Being a very humane child, I erased all the weapons in these pictures by picking off the ink with a pin: the club with which Cain killed Abel, the sword in the hands of Joshua when he commanded the sun and moon to stand still.

Grandfather Aldis was a judge of the Supreme Court, and his house was the resort of the most gifted and influential men in

the community. I used to sit unobserved in a corner of the room and listen to discourses upon politics, literature, religion, philosophy, current events, and the mysteries of human life. How grand and conclusive were the ideas of these oracles, prophets, magi, as they appeared to my unsophisticated mind! My whole life was influenced by them!

Only an orchard with a turn stile in the fence separated Grandfather's house from ours, and on the low-hanging crooked bough of an apple tree my cousin Emily Dunbar and I often sat on pleasant days eating apples or pears and studying our lessons; they were always well learned though a small portion of the happy time was given to them.

*“Oh the endless joys of the days of old,  
With the path that led to the fruited trees,  
Where the dandelions their coins of gold  
Had scattered to bribe the bumblebees.  
Down in the grass was the crickets chirr,  
And overhead was the dragonfly,  
And round about us everywhere  
Was the dreamy gleam of the days gone by!”*

Poor innocents! We both had a keen sense of the ludicrous. How little we dreamed, swinging on that crooked branch amid jokes, laughter, and schemes for frolic of the serious checkered life before us, of the grave responsibilities, trials, disappointments, cares, losses, and inevitable changes that would sober our thoughtless gaiety, sadden our hearts, and stamp lines of. thought upon our features: Would we wish it otherwise? Not now - Evil stands in the world that men may grow strong by wrestling with it.” Human character is “made perfect by suffering.”

*“I have passed from it forever. All the wonder and the glamour  
Of the little eastern window from the world have worn away;  
I have seen its disappointment; I have heard its empty clamor;  
And the house I once thought wonderful - how pitiful today, But who  
knows?*

*Perhaps eternity may bring a realing*

*Of the things my fancy painted over childhoods early morn;  
And, mayhap, the gift of prophecy was, after all, arising  
In my heart when I lay dreaming in the house where I was born.”*

Children were taught very differently in those days; I will not say better, but more thoroughly in some respects. I distinctly recall a circumstance which occurred in 1826 (the date is positive) when I was not quite seven years old. One Saturday afternoon holiday I asked permission to spend it in a near meadow gathering strawberries. My mother said, “Have you learned your Sunday School lesson?” I was obliged to answer in the negative.

*“Where is the lesson for tomorrow?”*

*“It is the second chapter of Matthew.”*

“Very well,” says mother, “You may go when you have learned it.”

That chapter has 23 verses, and I repeated it from memory before I was allowed to go to the strawberry field about 4 o'clock. I can repeat it now with slight prompting. Rather exacting and severe compared with modern methods, especially in Bible teaching, but I thank my parents for such mental discipline; it

developed a memory for words that has been incalculable advantage all my life.

The barn-like churches were not warmed in cold weather nor carpeted. There were no India rubbers or fur-lined overshoes; knit oversocks soled with a piece of an old felt hat for women, and leather overshoes for men were a poor substitute, and to prevent freezing in winter, foot stoves were invented. These were perforated tin boxes enclosed in a wooden frame 12 inches square. Inside this box was placed a sheet iron pan filled with live coals, the door was closed, and the foot stove was carried to church swinging on a wire handle. Happy and warm was the child to which this office was entrusted!

The change in religious thought is as marvelous as in methods, but a passing allusion is all our limit permits to this most important subject. The only musical instrument to aid the choir and our devotions was a gruff base violin which, in the hands of an athlete, growled accompaniment to the singers self-taught or instructed en masse by a teacher who met the candidates for choir promotion once a week during some part of the winter months. These singing schools were quite of a social nature, and many a happy marriage was the result of sympathies discovered and matured during the cold walks home from singing school.

I must not forget to mention two great anniversaries - the only holidays of our Vermont ancestors - the Fourth of July celebration and Thanksgiving. The first of these festivals was usually held on the common or in some grove; cannons were fired, an oration was delivered, and a grand collation served. I recall one such held in my father's orchard. A long table of rough boards erected under the shady apple trees was covered by white table cloths decorated with flowers and evergreens, and loaded with cold

meats, pies, cakes, and other dainties. There was patriotic music, though the oration was delivered elsewhere. The high grass was mown to simulate walks through which men, women, and children passed in quiet decorous enjoyment.

Thanksgiving was observed in November. Religious service was held in the churches, but the most notable feature of the day (at least to the youthful participants) was the feast. The menu was usually an oyster stew, a roast turkey with cranberry sauce, chicken pie, rice pudding with raisins, apple, mince and pumpkin pies, fine vegetables and magnificent fruits of the orchard.

New Year was the time for exchanging presents. Fast Day was solemnized in April.

When I was quite young, long, long ago, I heard many stories of early days in Vermont so peculiar they fastened themselves in the recesses of memory. Two or three of these seem worthy of preservation, and hoping they will not only prove interesting to you but thus be rescued from oblivion I will relate them.

One story pertains to events, which occurred on the east side of the state, I think in Windsor or Windham County. The names of parties and places are forgotten, but the circumstances are indelibly stamped on my mind.

In those days of sparse and scattered population social gatherings and recreations were few, confined mostly to quilting bees, corn huskings, and apple parings, as has been previously mentioned. After work was done, sometimes an amateur fiddler struck up a jig and dancing followed.

Upon one such occasion in a small retired farm house when refreshments were about to be served, the mistress sent a newly hired man down cellar to draw cider from a barrel to accompany

the doughnuts, pumpkin pie, and cheese. The only illumination on these festive occasions was from tallow candles, and as all the candlesticks were in use, she placed a lighted bare dip in his hand with precise instructions as to the position of the cider barrel. He went on his errand, but being strange to the place lost the points of compass going down stairs and soon returned saying he could not find the barrel.

“Where did you leave the candle?” said the anxious matron, noticing it was not in his hand. “OH,” said the bewildered rustic, “I opened a keg of onion seed in the corner and stuck the candle safe into it.” “Onion seed!” exclaimed the dismayed housekeeper, “there is no onion seed in the house.”

In those days of isolation and danger from wild beasts, Indians, and other marauders, each householder kept a flint lock gun and a keg of powder in his own house.

The dazed errand boy had gone to the wrong corner of the cellar and plunged a lighted candle into a keg of powder!!

Horrible possibilities overwhelmed the responsible mistress!

One instant of hesitation, one false motion, and all would be lost. Not a scream, not a word did this heroic woman utter. She took no one, not even her husband into confidence, and though her own life might be the first sacrifice, she flew on the wings of terror down the rickety stairs and guided by the flickering candle that jarred with every motion of the dancers’ tread threatening to upset it or throw off a spark she reached the perilous spot, removed the candle without a tremor and made her way back up stairs. The guests were laughing, talking, and dancing to the sound of the squeaking fiddle all unconscious of the fact that an awful explosion, which would have blown the house to fragments and themselves into eternity, had just been averted by the steady nerve

and extraordinary courage of their hostess. I never think of this brave woman's peril without a shudder.

Another incident of a later date may perhaps be permitted in this place as not without interest. One spring morning an electric thrill pervaded our quiet village. Men on horseback or on foot were rushing to and fro talking and gesticulating wildly. Upon inquiry as to this unusual excitement, we learned that a ferocious wolf had been ravaging the northeastern part of Franklin county and was now hiding on Aldis hill. Sheep, calves, and swine had been killed, and the farmers finding the loss intolerable had been hunting the savage beast three days without getting a shot at him.

Someone in the perplexed crowd cried out, "Call Lawrence Brainerd, he will get the wolf!" He was a man of powerful physique, great sagacity, undaunted courage, steady nerve, and an expert marksman. These qualities had been tested when he was deputized to assist officers of the law in arresting and bringing to justice criminals who were trying to escape over the border into Canada. To Mr. Brainerd's store the crowd surged, demanding his aid.

Mr. Brainerd, who never shrank from any place where "duty called or danger," immediately left the store, came to the house, secured his rifle and some home-made bullets. His son Aldis and John Lynde, lads of sixteen or eighteen years of age, asked if they might accompany him.

The three climbed the hill where men and horses were running around in aimless confusion. After a brief survey of the scene, Mr. Brainerd perceived that the dogs mostly congregated near a ledge on the east side of the hill, running toward it and away from it, as if in fear. He believed their action indicated the presence of the foe in that locality, and going to the highest point of the ledge

kneeled and looked over the precipitous edge, one of the boys on each side of him: After a few moments of silent inspection a great shaggy head protruded from a crevice in the rock. Aldis exclaimed, "There he is, there he is, father!"

Hearing a voice the wolf drew back out of sight. Mr. Brainerd said, "Don't speak again or make the slightest noise." All was quiet and motionless. Soon the head appeared again at another opening of the rock and the huge body followed. When the wolf was fairly out of cover, Mr. Brainerd fired, and the great beast made one plunge forward, struck his head to the ground, turned a complete somersault, and lay dead with a bullet in his heart.

The report of a rifle drew the scattered crowd together; a blanket was spread upon the back of a steady old horse, the wolf was laid thereon, and the triumphant train proceeded to the residence of Mr. Brainerd. Here the body of the beast was stretched on the lawn, and it measured six feet from tip of nose to the end of its tail. It was then taken to the principal tavern. Mr. Brainerd ordered the best refreshments that could be procured, barring intoxicants, gave the bounty for the wolf's head, twenty dollars, to the hunters, and returned to his suspended work in the store, abundantly satisfied with his success in ridding the county of a savage marauder.

What astonishing changes and advances have been made in civilization since that time! President Bartlett of Dartmouth thus spoke of them when celebrating his eightieth birthday:

"My memory goes back to the flintlock gun and the smooth bore cannon, to the open fireplace, the universal wood fire, and the tinder box. I saw light a dozen years before the first friction match was used. I heard the hum of the spinning wheel; I saw the shuttle fly back and forth in the handloom. Sixty years ago a letter was two

days in transit from Boston to Hanover, New Hampshire. Forty years afterward I sent a message from Jerusalem to Chicago in one forenoon.”

Another person says in speaking of Senator Morrill’s life of 88 years, “Of the great inventions and discoveries that have annihilated space, abolished time, and subjugated the forces of nature, making the depths of the sea articulate and the darkness of night luminous, not one existed when Senator Morrill was born. There was not a friction match, an iron ploughshare, nor a mile of railroad in the world. The telegraph, telephone, audiphone, the typewriter, the sewing machine, electric illumination, agricultural machinery, chloroform, and other indispensable agencies of modern civilization were unknown.” To these recent inventions already mentioned may be added wood pulp paper, the automobile, the bicycle, the vitascope, the megaphone, electrical motors, and wireless telegraphy.

The very pen with which I write was not then invented. A goose quill, tortured into proper shape by a penknife, scrawled our manuscripts on expensive paper manufactured from white rags.

How did people manage to live in those days of hardship, exhausting labor, and harassing inconvenience? I suppose it was the survival of the fittest: The frail ones died, the strong constitutions survived, and a hardy race was the result. Such is the power of adaptation in animal life, particularly in mankind.

How did we live? I don’t know, but we did and were happy. A man with a hundred thousand dollars at that time was as rich as the multi-millionaire of today. A two-story brick house in rural Vermont was as grand as a Fifth Avenue brownstone palace.

My rag doll of pen and ink features, in its cotton drapery with a string around its waist for its figure, was as dear and

precious to me as the wax and bisque masterpiece of art in fashionable attire are to my little granddaughters. Social and economic conditions are vastly improved. But are we stronger, better, happier?

*“As a man thinketh so is he, howevertuch we may reason differently]’  
‘A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesseth.”  
‘The secret place of content, like the Kingdom of Heaven, is within us.”*

Shall we congratulate ourselves and boast of our wonderful wealth, national success and progress? We may be very thankful, but in the language of St. Paul “boasting is excluded.” My friends, “that which hath been, is; that which is now will be” in ceaseless continuance.

*“Time, as it is, cannot stay, nor again as it was, can it be,  
Disappearing and passing away are the world and the ages and we.”*

The life of nations and races, yea and of worlds, is like that of individuals; man is the microcosm, the universe the macrocosm. Growth and decay, rise and decline, stagnation is death. Change, change is the great law of life in never-ending evolution and revolution.

Strange colossal forms of men and animals in unknown past ages have drifted round this old, old world of which no vestige remains save fossils of giant vegetation, petrified skeletons of men and uncouth animals, and mounds of ashes where cities may have flourished.

Atlantean civilization, of which the old Egyptian was but a descendent, exceeded our own. What architect would not contract

to build the pyramids of Central America and Africa? Who now can guide ships though the air and fight aerial battles, yoke the lion to his car, and domesticate the savage beast? Where now is the machinery that would transport the pillars of Stonehange, estimated to weigh 85 tons, from a quarry 100 miles distant, or place the stones of Karnac and Baalbec? What sculptor could carve the Sphinx, or the statues in the subterranean temples of India?

Yet these civilizations have passed away as ours undoubtedly will.

This comparison of our immediate past with that of unchronicled remote ages should check conceit and teach us humility, and while we rejoice that the Almighty Originator of these vast designs has made us, however insignificant, participators in His stupendous work, we may reverentially say with a Russian poet:

*‘Sourceless and endless God - compared with Thee Life is a shadowy momentary dream, And time when viewed through Thy Eternity Less than a mote of morning’s golden beam.’*

*St. Albans 1902 A. E. B. Smith*

*Here is another article written by Mrs. Smith about her encounters with Edwin M. Stanton the famous Secretary of War second only to Abraham Lincoln in shaping the war policy of the nation during the Civil War.*

# ***The Vermonter***

## ***Reminiscences of Edwin M. Stanton***

*Mrs. J. Gregory Smith*

“If I remember correctly, during the summer of 1864, I was in Washington with Mr. Smith, then Governor of Vermont, and in the War Department first saw Mr. Stanton. His piercing black eyes, unusually large, and his grand, stern mein somewhat awed me, but his words were courteous and his manner reassuring. After the important business that had called my husband to Washington was disposed of, Mr. Stanton invited us to meet him in the evening at the Soldier’s Rest, a few miles from the city, where his family were then stopping. I remember he came in late, about nine o’clock, and almost immediately began conversation with me. “How does the war affect you in Vermont?” he said. “Not very seriously,” I answered, “things go on much as usual. Of course, we are intensely anxious, but it is only as we hear of the wounding or death of some acquaintance, that the reality is forced upon us.” “Ah,” said Mr. Stanton, “I fear it is so, The people don’t pray enough.” he added with emphasis, “they eat and drink, they marry and are given in marriage, forgetting the mortal throes in which the nation is struggling, the horrors of war, and its tearful uncertainty.”

He was fatigued, sad, and depressed. I spoke hopefully, endeavoring to cheer him. “My Spanish castles are in Vermont,” he said, “when I am tired and discouraged and everything looks black, I close my eyes and imagine how cool, green, and quiet it is away off in Vermont.” An invitation was given him that evening to visit his “Spanish possessions” whenever the exigencies of the government would

permit him to leave Washington. Three years afterward we were honored by a visit from Mr. Stanton and his family, but before that time the realities and horrors of war were forced upon us in a very unexpected manner. October 19, 1864, Bennett Young and his murderous crew of Southern refugees in Canada raided our quiet village, scattered Greek fire among our buildings, shot two of our citizens, killing one (strangely enough, a "copperhead,") robbed the banks, stole horses, and fled across the Canada line. For nine months thereafter our house was a military station, guarded by United States soldiers night and day!

Mr. Stanton arrived at St. Albans on the evening of September 5th, 1867. As soon as the dust of travel was removed, he went out upon the lawn and ran around like a boy, exclaiming, "I can breathe, I can breathe in this air!

He was a sufferer from asthma and the pure atmosphere of a high locality was to him an elixir. It was a great pleasure to see him so comfortable, carefree and happy: after the turmoil and strife of battle, came relaxation and rest. Iron will and inexorable severity were laid aside, the stern Roman was companionable, gentle, even gay, joking with the young people, playing croquet with the children, walking in the grounds, taking long quiet drives in the country, attending church and Sunday school, greatly enjoying the services.

We gave one general reception for the famous Secretary of War and hundreds of our townsmen as well as people from other parts of the State availed themselves of the opportunity to pay their respects to this man, only second to Abraham Lincoln in shaping the war policy of the nation. But the quiet social hours spent in unrestricted interchange of thought were what we most enjoyed. At such moments Mr. Stanton related some of his wonderful experiences. Upon one occasion he recounted the extraordinary circumstances, which enabled

him to win the famous bridge lawsuit that made his reputation as a lawyer. The case was an obscure one and he fell asleep one night striving in vain to grasp a point in law that would save it. Going into his library in the morning, he found to his inexpressible astonishment, a brief in his own handwriting made during a fit of somnambulism, which solved the difficulty and won the suit!

One evening when a few familiar friends were gathered in the library, the subject of woman's rights was introduced. After remarks from others, Mr. Stanton somewhat surprised us by saying, "I am an advocate of woman's suffrage. I was converted by reading the works of John Stewart Mills." One of the gentlemen answered, "If you give them the right to vote you give them the right to rule."

"Most certainly I do," Mr. Stanton replied, and the history of Europe demonstrates that whenever women have reigned, the government has been more humane and beneficent, the people have been happier and the nation more prosperous than under the rule of men. It has been the same in India when princes have died and queens have governed during the minority of their sons." Facts are certainly more convincing than theories, and Mr. Stanton made the strongest argument I have ever heard in favor of woman's suffrage.

Upon another occasion when the St. Albans raid was discussed Mr. Stanton said, "The (lay of the raid was one of the darkest during the war. For two days previous I had been at the Department continuously, not daring to leave the telegraph, which brought the most alarming intelligence. Harper's Ferry one of our strongest fortresses had been taken by the enemy, and their army was approaching Washington. We were defenseless, at the mercy of a triumphant foe. On the afternoon of October 19th, came news that a battle was raging at Cedar Creek, followed by a telegram from the north that St. Albans was in the hands of southern refugees, who were

burning the houses and killing the citizens. The wires then stopped working and I could but fear the worst had happened. The hours of night dragged slowly on. The suspense was intolerable and about six o'clock in the morning I became so wretched and restless that I went out into the street and walked rapidly up the Avenue hoping thus to regain some measure of tranquility. Presently in the grey light of the early dawn, I saw a solitary cavalryman dashing down the street at a tearing gallop.

My heart sank—the worst had happened I thought, the army routed and panic stricken is flying from pursuers to a place that affords no protection; this man is the advanced courier bringing the dreadful news. I held up my hand, ordering him to halt. Breathless with excitement and his furious ride, he panted out, “There has been a great battle at Cedar Creek, the enemy became entangled in the streets of Winchester. Tremendous victory thousands of prisoners and forty-five cannon captured.” Throwing up my hand towards heaven I exclaimed, “Thank God, I will now go home and sleep.” Immediately after came word from St. Albans, that the raiders had fled into Canada and the town was strongly guarded.

After a visit of a week, Mr. Stanton returned to Washington and presently wrote me a letter of thanks for our hospitality, which letter was a model of courtly elegance. Thirty years have passed since those memorable days and in the grave events which have occurred during that period many incidents are forgotten, but one which was committed to paper soon after its occurrence in 1863 or 1864 is of unusual interest.

Mr. Smith's official relations with the Secretary of War were always very agreeable, and the acquaintance thus formed, soon assumed a social and confidential character. When Mr. Smith went to the War Department he was often invited to leave the ante-room and

await his turn in Mr. Stanton's private office, after business matters were completed, they would converse upon other subjects of mutual interest. Upon one of these occasions the servant brought in a card which Mr. Stanton glanced at and in a changed peremptory tone said, "Show the person in!" A lady of quite imposing appearance entered whose elegant dress and easy manners indicated thorough acquaintance with the etiquette of the fashionable world.

"What is your wish madam?" said Mr. Stanton in a stern voice.

"Mr. Secretary," said the lady in a deprecating tone, "I come to implore your clemency in behalf of my husband. He is as you know an exile in Canada, and I beg you to allow him to return to his home."

Mr. Stanton paused as if formulating words for an answer, and then said in a tone not to be misunderstood or contraverted, "Yes madam, your husband may return—I am quite willing he should do so—and as soon as he crosses the line—I will hang him!"

The lady bowed and retired and Mr. Stanton turning to Mr. Smith, said, "Did not my answer appear to you very savage?"

He replied that "It did seem unnecessarily severe."

"It will not appear so," said Mr. Stanton, "when I tell you the story of that woman. Her own and her husband's family have for generations fattened at the public crib. They have held some of the most lucrative and confidential offices in the gift of the government. How have these pampered pets returned the nation's favor in the hour of peril, when her very existence was threatened?"

At the beginning of the war certain policies of the government and certain movements of the army were decided upon, known only to the President and myself, and kept by us, as we supposed, profoundly secret, a precaution absolutely necessary for their success.

What, then, was our dismay, upon inaugurating the initiatory movements, to find the enemy thoroughly acquainted with our plans,

and prepared for us at every point—a circumstance which could not have been possible unless we had been betrayed, in a most dastardly and outrageous manner, by some person near us. Who then was the traitor? Suspicion pointed directly to the husband of this woman. He was arrested, but nothing could be proved, and upon the most solemn asseverations of innocence and oaths of loyalty, he was released.

Again the treason was repeated, a second time our councils were betrayed and our plans baffled. The whispers of the secret chamber were bruited in the camp of the enemy; disaster and defeat followed. Now we were convinced of what we had before suspected officers were immediately dispatched for the arrest of the traitor, but he could not be found. Upon investigation it was discovered that this perfidious knave had fled to Canada, and that his accomplice and emissary was the woman who stood before us this morning, who by night, in disguise, had upon both occasions, carried her ill-gotten information into the camp of the enemy.”

Mr. Stanton paused awhile in thought, remembering, no doubt, the disheartening delays, the unexpected failures, the waste of money, above all the suffering and death of loyal men, caused by this woman’s treachery. Presently he spoke again, “Was my answer to this woman too severe

“No” was the prompt reply, “you could not have said less.”

At this moment another card was brought in by the waiter. A pale, sad-eyed woman followed, whose rusty, travel-stained garments and timid manner marked her as belonging to the class sometimes called the decent poor. Mr. Stanton went forward, greeted her in a friendly manner and offered her a chair. She trembled, her eyes filled with tears, as in a broken voice she faltered, “Mr. Secretary, I gave my husband and one son to the country. They are dead, and now my youngest, all I have left, a minor, who enlisted, to fill in some measure

the place of the lost, is ill in a hospital and I come to ask for his discharge.”

There was no need to examine the credentials that confirmed this story, evidently “She had known sorrow, he had walked with her, oft supped and broke with her the ashen crust.”

The contrast between this woman and the one who preceded her, the diversity in dress and manner, and above in the nature of the errands, was very striking. One, assuming the mask of humility, bowed low and craved the clemency of the power she hated and had striven to destroy; the other transparent in honest purpose, told her story so simply, that the favor was granted almost before the request was made. No magic spectacles were required to read these characters. Without a word Mr. Stanton took a blank, wrote the boy’s discharge and presented it to the poor mother who speechless with emotion hastily left the room.

In this incident are seen the prominent characteristics of this remarkable man; his loyalty and abhorrence of anything dishonorable or treacherous, his stern sense of justice and fearless adherence to his conviction; with these loftier virtues, oh rare combination, a tender, sympathetic nature. His life was, from the stress of circumstances, a conflict of the moral antinomies, head struggling with heart. Such antagonisms belong to the imperishable attributes of humanity and may we not hope that in the present state of this lofty soul’s existence, they are happily conciliated”.



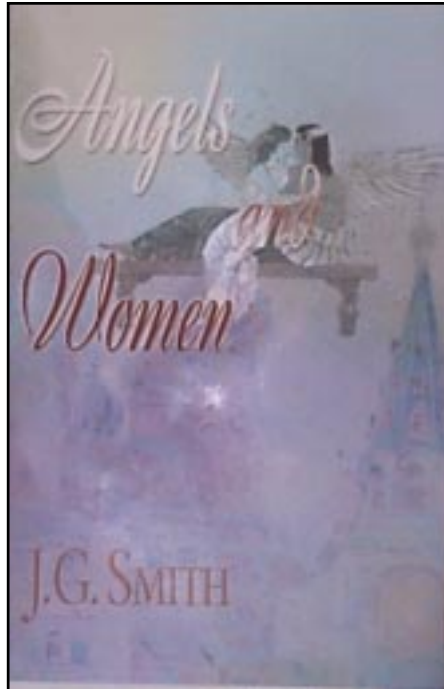
**M**rs. Smith died in 1905; her passing away was most likely a small town story, her funeral attended by friends and family, paying their last token of respect to a venerable daughter of St. Albans.

If I didn't come across the *Angels And Women* book in 1978 this story might not of been told, and I wouldn't be here writing this article today.

Hopefully the book *Angels and Women* will be a legacy to her and I'm happy I had a small part in bringing this book and her story to life again.

My next hope would be to see the book made into a movie, that would bring the story around full circle, the ultimate tribute to this remarkable women.

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***Angels & Women***  
***by J.G. Smith***  
***is available through***  
***Amazon.com***