

THE HEART
OF THE
WHITE MOUNTAINS

THEIR LEGEND AND SCENERY

BY
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"CAPTAIN NELSON" ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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"Eyes loose; thoughts close"

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
1882

JULY 2009
EXCERPT

VI.

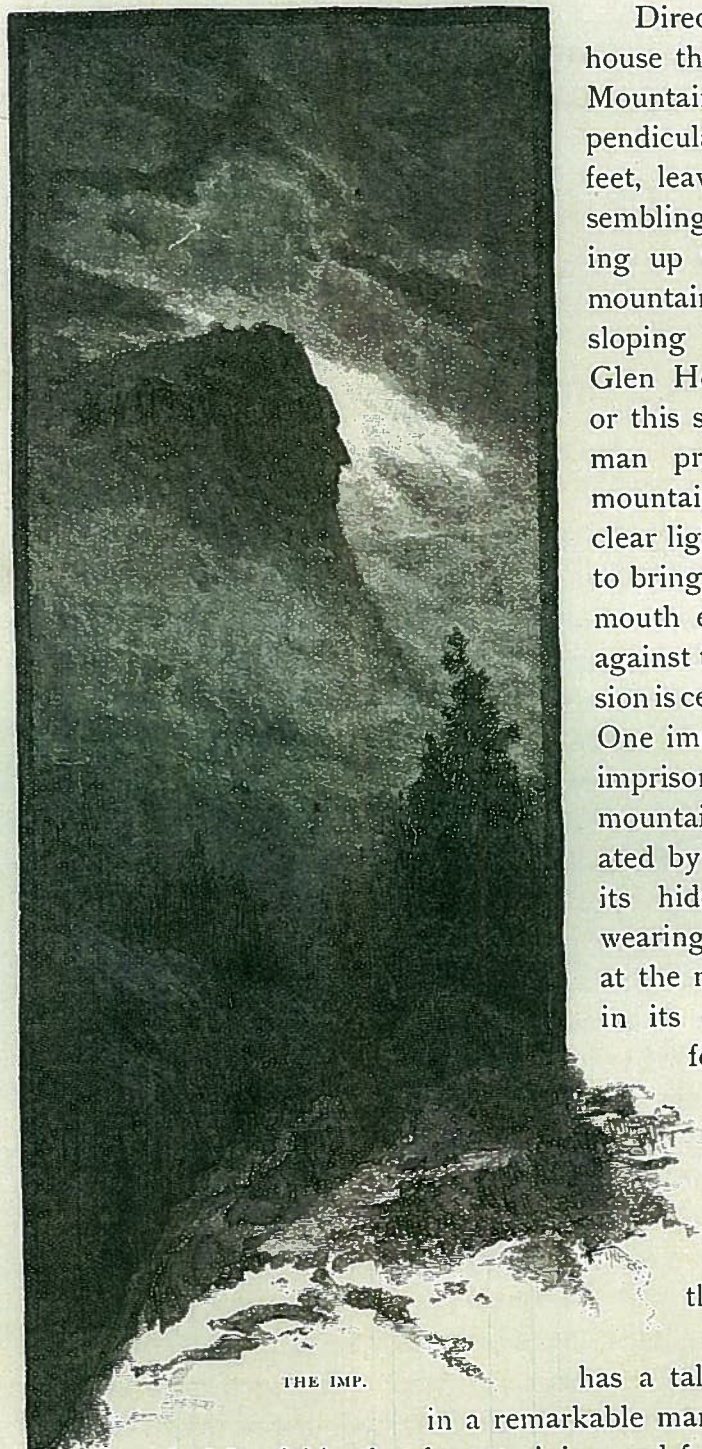
IN AND ABOUT GORHAM.

That lonely dwelling stood among the hills
By a gray mountain stream.—SOUTHEY.

AFTER the events described in the last chapter, I continued, like the navigator of unknown coasts, my tour of the great range. Half a mile below the Glen House, the Great Gulf discharges from its black throat the little river rising on the plateau at its head. The head of this stupendous abyss is a mountain, and mountains wall it in. Its depths remain unexplored except by an occasional angler or trapper.

Two and a half miles farther on a road diverges to the left, crosses the Peabody by a bridge, and stretches on over a depression of the range to Randolph, where it intersects the great route from Lancaster and Jefferson to Gorham. Over the river, snugly ensconced at the foot of Mount Madison, is the old Copp place. Commanding, as it does, a noble prospect up and down the valley, and of all the great peaks except Washington, its situation is most inviting; more than this, the picture of the weather-stained farm-house nestling among these sleeping giants revives in fullest vigor our preconceived idea of life in the mountains, already shaken by the balls, routs, and grand toilets of the hotels. The house, as we see by Mistress Dolly Copp's register, has been known to many generations of tourists. The Cops have lived here about half a century.

Travellers going up or down, between the Glen House and Gorham, usually make a détour as far as Copp's, in order to view the Imp to better advantage than can be done from the road. Among these travellers some have now and then knocked at the door and demanded to see the Imp. The hired girl invariably requests them to wait until she can call the mistress.



THE IMP.

Directly opposite the farmhouse the inclined ridge of Imp Mountain is broken down perpendicularly some two hundred feet, leaving a jagged cliff, resembling an immense step, facing up the valley. This is a mountain of the Carter chain, sloping gradually toward the Glen House. Upon this cliff, or this step, is the distorted human profile which gives the mountain its name. A strong, clear light behind it is necessary to bring out all the features, the mouth especially, in bold relief against the sky, when the expression is certainly almost diabolical. One imagines that some goblin, imprisoned for ages within the mountain, and suddenly liberated by an earthquake, exhibits its hideous countenance, still wearing the same look it wore at the moment it was entombed in its mask of granite. The forenoon is the best time, and the road, a few rods back from the house, the best point from which to see it. The coal-black face is then in shadow.

The Copp farm-house has a tale of its own, illustrating in a remarkable manner the amount of physical hardship that long training, and familiarity with rough out-of-door life, will occasionally enable men to endure. Seeing two men in

the door-yard, I sat down on the chopping-block, and entered into conversation with them.

By the time I had taken out my note-book I had all the members of the household and all the inmates of the barn-yard around me. I might add that all were talking at once. The matron stood in the door-way, which her ample figure quite filled, trifling with the beads of a gold necklace. A younger face stared out over her shoulder; while an old man, whose countenance had hardened into a vacant smile, and one of forty or thereabouts, alternately passed my glass one to the other, with an astonishment similar to that displayed by Friday when he first looked through Crusoe's telescope.

"Which of you is named Nathaniel Copp?" I asked, after they had satisfied their curiosity.

"That is my name," the younger very deliberately responded. "Really," thought I, "there is little enough of the conventional hero in that face;" therefore I again asked, "Are you the same Nathaniel Copp who was lost while hunting in the mountains, let me see, about twenty-five years ago?"

"Yes; but I wasn't lost after I got down to Wild River," he hastily rejoined, like a man who has a reputation to defend.

"Tell me about it, will you?"

I take from my note-book the following relation of the exploit of this mountain Nimrod, as I received it on the spot. But I had literally to draw it out of him, a syllable at a time.

On the last day of January, 1855, Nathaniel Copp, son of Hayes D. Copp, of Pinkham's Grant, near the Glen House, set out from home on a deer hunt, and was out four successive days. On the fifth day he again left to look for a deer killed the previous day, about eight miles from home. Having found it, he dragged the carcass (weighing two hundred and thirty pounds) home through the snow, and at one o'clock P.M. started for another he had tracked near the place where the former was killed, which he followed until he lost the track, at dark. He then found that he had lost his own way, and should, in all probability, be obliged to spend the night in the woods, with the temperature ranging from 32° to 35° below zero.

Knowing that to remain quiet was certain death, and having nothing with which to light a fire, the hunter began walking for his life. The moon shone out bright and clear, making the cold seem even more in-

tense. While revolving in his mind his unpleasant predicament he heard a deer bleat. He gave chase, and easily overtook it. The snow was too deep for the animal to escape from a hunter on snow-shoes. Copp leaped upon his back, and despatched him with his hunting-knife. He then dressed him, and, taking out the heart, put it in his pocket, not for a trophy, but, as he told me, to keep starvation at arm's-length. The excitement of the chase made him forget cold until he perceived himself growing benumbed. Rousing himself, he again pushed on, whither he knew not, but spurred by the instinct of self-preservation. Daylight found him still striding on, with no clew to a way out of the thick woods, which imprisoned him on every side. At length, at ten in the morning, he came out at or near Wild River, in Gilead, forty miles from home, having walked twenty one consecutive hours without rest or food, the greater part of the time through a tangled growth of underbrush.

His friends at home becoming alarmed at his prolonged absence during such freezing weather, three of them, Hayes D. Copp, his father, John Goulding, and Thomas Culhane, started in search of him. They followed his track until it was lost in the darkness, and, by the aid of their dog, found the deer which young Copp had killed and dressed. They again started on the trail, but with the faintest hope of ever finding the lost man alive, and, after being out twenty-six hours in the extreme cold, found the object of their search.

No words can do justice to the heroic self-denial and fortitude with which these men continued an almost hopeless search, when every moment expecting to find the stiffened corpse of their friend. Goulding froze both feet; the others their ears.

When found, young Copp did not seem to realize in the least the great danger through which he had passed, and talked with perfect unconcern of hunts that he had planned for the next week. One of his feet was so badly frozen, from the effect of too tightly lacing his snow-shoe, that the toes had to be amputated.

Until reaching the bridge, within two miles of Gorham, I saw no one, heard nothing except the strokes of an axe, borne on the still air from some logging-camp, twittering birds, or chattering river. Ascending the hill above the bridge, I took my last look back at Mount Washington, over whose head rose-tinted clouds hung in graceful folds. The summit was beautifully distinct. The bases of all the mountains were floating in that delicious blue haze, enrapturing to the artist, exasper-