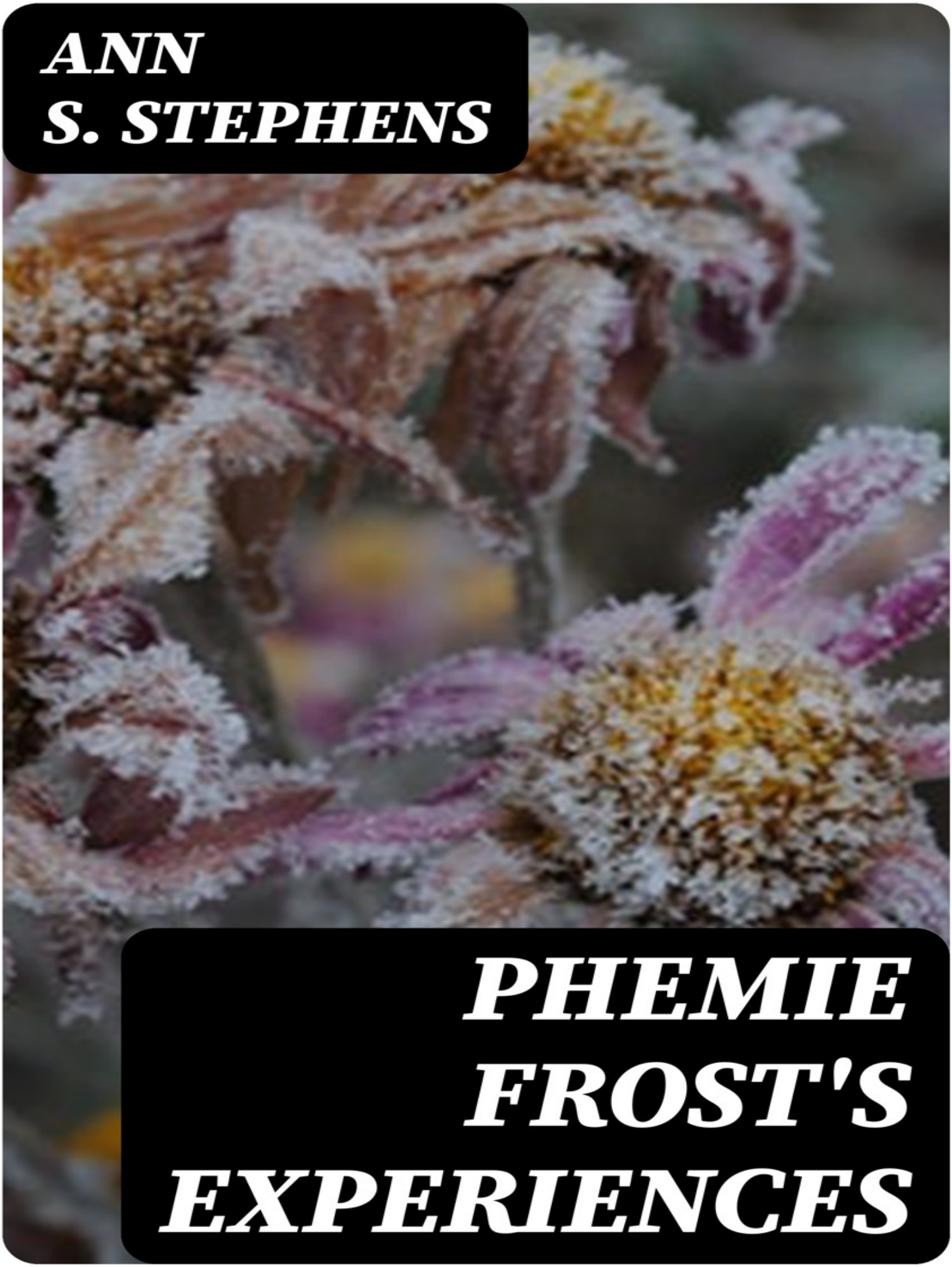
ANN
S. STEPHENS
PHEMIE
FROST'S
EXPERIENCES

Ann S. Stephens

Phemie Frost's Experiences

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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PREFACE.

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THISTLE down, thistle down, cast to the wind
So lightly and wildly, you scarcely can find
A glimpse of it here, or a gleam of it there,
As it trembles, a silvery mist, on the air.

Like the wide thorny leaves whence the mother root threw
Up its crown of rich purple, bejewelled with dew,
These feathery nothings, barbed, sparsely, with seeds,
Must struggle for life with the brambles and weeds.

PHŒMIE FROST'S EXPERIENCES.

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I.

LEAVING HOME.

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I HAVE made up my mind. Having put my hand to the plough, it isn't in me to back out of a duty when duty and one's own wishes sail amicably in the same canoe. I am going to give myself up to the good of mankind and the dissemination of great moral ideas.

Selected by the Society of Infinite Progress as its travelling missionary, with power to spread the most transcendental of New England ideas throughout the world, I shall take up my cross and go forth.

The evening after the Society had crowned me with this honor, I asked Aunt Kesiah and Uncle Ben Frost, who have been working the farm on shares ever since my father died, if they could not make out to do without me for some months, or weeks, or years, just as duty or my own feelings took a notion to stay.

Aunt Kesiah sat right down in the rocking-chair, and looked straight in my face for a whole minute without speaking.

"What," says she at last, "going away from home at your age—a female woman all alone in the world! You and the Society just take my breath away, Phœmie. Where on arth are you a going to?"

"Well," says I, "it seems to be my duty to seek a field where there is the most sin and iniquity a going on, where dishonesty rides rampagnatious as a roaring lion, and fashion flaunts herself like a peacock with moons in every tail feather. First of all, the field of my duty lies in York, that Babylon of cities."

"But whose a going to bear the expenses?" says Uncle Ben, who always was 'cute as a miser about money matters.

"Duty is sumtimes raythеr expensive."

"The Society," answers I. "The members are a picking up produce now, I shan't go empty-handed on my mission. All the members are wide awake about that. Crops have been first-rate."

"Yes," says Uncle Ben, "I give in there."

"And hens never laid better since chickens were hatched," continued I.

"Jes' so," says Aunt Kesiah, "if the pesky creturs wouldn't run off and hide their nests."

"Hams are plenty, smoked beef ditto, to say nothing of dried apples. I mean to sell everything at a profit and settle accounts with the Society."

"I reckon you'll get cut short; up to this time there has bin lots of talking in that Society. When it comes to giving—but never mind—we shall see!"

"There, there, Benjamin, don't you go to pouring cold water on our Phœmie's missionary work. She is sot on going, so let her go."

"Is she sot?" says Uncle Ben, looking at me sort of anxious.

"Yes," says I, "my face is turned to the mark of the prize of the high calling."

"Jes' so," says Uncle Ben, "got your hand on the prow with a hard grip? That being the fact, old woman, the best thing is for you to lend a helping hand and send her off comfortably. She can try anyhow, though I have a notion that the world has got to be so wicked since the war, that one female woman—"

"Girl!" says I.

"Well, girl—may fall short of regenerating the hull of it all to once. Still there is no knowing what any one can do till they try."

"When do you lay out to start?" says Aunt Kesiah, all in a flutter.

"Right off," says I.

"By land or water?"

"Both," says I.

"Oh, dear! what if you should get shipwrecked, and all the produce and garden sass with you!" says she.

"There now, don't skeer the girl, Kesiah," says Uncle Ben. "The Sound don't rage to any great extent, neither are the engines alles a busting as a general thing."

"Well, well, if she's sot on going, I'll do my best to help get her off," says Aunt Kesiah, and she goes right to putting lard in a kettle, and while it was a heating, rolled out a lot of doughnuts, which article of food she excels in. For two whole days that good soul devoted herself to making crullers, doughnuts, and turnover pies, as if she thought I should not find anything to eat till I got home again.

Well, by and by the day came for me to start. That tea-party and a prayer-meeting at Deacon Pettibone's house was a season that none of us will ever forget. Mrs. Pettibone, our president, is a wonderfully gifted woman, and that night she seized right hold of the horns of the altar and fairly beat herself. Oh, sisters, it was a touching time when I drove with Uncle Ben through Sprucehill a bowing from one window to another, for every member of the Society seemed to rush heart and soul to the windows; and when I found your executive committee on that platform, the tears

that had been standing in my eyes just burst out and overflowed my soul.

There I sat on my trunk in your midst, with a bandbox at my feet, and a new satchel, large, plump, and shiny, in my hand, ready to start, but feeling the responsibility of my trust, and the danger of a young girl going forth into the world all alone. No wonder some of you thought I should give up and take my hand from the plough. It was a trying situation. I felt it; I suffered; but, knowing that the eyes of all Sprucehill were upon me, I was firm. Yes, even when Aunt Kesiah placed that satchel in my lap, and told me with tears in her eyes to take special care of it, for she did not know what I should do if it got lost.

She said this so loud, and with such deep sobs, that a tall gentleman who stood on the platform with a satchel in his hand, seemed to be greatly affected by the touching scene, and kept close to us till the train come lumbering and snorting in.

Then, sisters, you remember how we fell upon each other's neck, and wept and kissed each other, then tore apart. How I went weeping into the cars leaving the satchel behind, and how Uncle Ben pushed it through the window, telling me to be awful careful of its precious contents so loud that everybody heard, and I have no doubt wondered how many thousand dollars it held. Well, the contents of that bag were miscellaneously precious. I had seen Aunt Kesiah pack it, with a feeling that made me homesick before I left the old farm. Doughnuts, crullers, turn-over pies, with luscious peach juice breaking through the curves. A great hunk of maple sugar, another of dried beef, some cheese,

and a pint bottle of cider. It nearly broke Aunt Kesiah's heart because she couldn't top things off with a pot of preserves, but I wasn't sorry, thinking they might be unhandy to carry.

Well, I took the satchel, set it upon my lap, and looked out of the window at you all, as well as I could for crying, till the train gave a jerk that made my teeth rattle, and moved on.

When I lost sight of you, sisters, I felt awfully lonesome and almost 'fraid to trust myself among so many masculine men as filled the cars. Being an unprotected female, with a certain amount of promiscuous property in my charge, I felt a commercial and moral responsibility that weighed down my shoulders till I felt like a camel with an enormous load to carry.

Had I been travelling with nothing but my own self to take care of, the sense of responsibility would have been less; but I could not help thinking that the dignity of our Society was in my keeping, and the anxieties of all Sprucehill followed me swifter than the cars could run or the snorting engine draw. So I pulled my dust-colored veil tight over my face, and, with my feet planted firm on the floor, sat bolt-upright, holding the satchel on my lap with both hands, kind of shivering for fear some man might attempt to sit down by me. I couldn't think of this without feeling as if I should sink right through the red velvet cushions that I sat on.

I was so anxious that my heart jumped right into my mouth when that man I had seen on the platform come my way. While he was looking around, the breath stood still on my lips, and I gave my satchel a grip which would have hurt

it if such things have any feeling. I have no doubt that the austerity of my countenance scared all the rest of them off, for most of 'em passed on, after giving me a regretful glance; but when he come in swinging his new satchel, so independent, I moved a little; for I knew he was a gentleman by the way he wore his hat—clear back on his head—by the great seal, with a red stone in it, on his finger, and by the heavy gold chain swinging across his breast.

When I saw this man's eyes fixed on my seat so beseeching, I kind of moved a little more and then let my eyes droop downward, determined not to help his presumptuous design to sit by me a single bit.

"Thank you," says he, sitting down close to me, and chucking his satchel under the seat. "If there is a superior person in the car, I'm certain to have the luck and the honor to sit beside her. Some people prefer to look out of the window, but I would rather gaze on a sweet, pretty face, by a long shot—especially if it does not belong to a girl with airs."

I felt myself blushing all over at this delicate compliment, and observed, with becoming diffidence and great originality, that "beauty was only skin-deep at the best, and not by any manner of means to be compared with Christian piety and high intellect."

The man—he was a stalwart, handsome man; not pursey like Deacon Pettibone, nor slim to bean-poleishness like the circuit preachers that live about, and only pick up a little roundness at camp-meetings; but tall, and what young ladies call imposing. Well, the man gave me another long look at this, and says he:

"But when all these things jibe in together so beautifully, who is to say which it is that captivates a man's fancy? Not I. It is my weakness to take lovely woman into the core of my heart as a whole; but, if there is one quality that I prize more than another, it is piety."

I blushed with thrilling consciousness of the grace that has been in me so long that it has become a part of my being; but his praise did not satisfy me. One hates to take sweet things in driblets, with a spoon, when the soup-ladle is handy.

"Piety is a thing to be had for praying, fasting, and unlimited devotion. Anybody can have it who grapples the horn of the altar in deadly earnest. In short, if there is anything that everybody on earth has a right to, it's religion. The only aristocracy there is about it, comes when one reaches the high point of perfect sanctification—a state that some people do reach, though it is sometimes so difficult to point out the particular person."

"Ah, indeed!" said he. "But I have penetration, madam, great penetration. Do not torture your sensitive modesty by an attempt to conceal extraordinary perfection from one who can so fully appreciate it, and who grieves to say how uncommon it is."

I said nothing, but dropped my eyes, and sat up straighter than ever.

"Permit me," says my polite fellow-traveller, gently laying his hand on my satchel; "this is too heavy for the lap of a delicate female. Supposing we place it side by side with mine under the seat?"

I held on to the satchel, afraid that he might mash one of the turn-over pies.

"Do allow me. I really tremble to see a person so formed by nature borne down by such a weight," says my fellow-traveller, with great impressiveness. "It isn't to be thought of."

"But—but I don't feel the weight so very much," says I, loosening my grip a trifle.

"But, my dear madam, remember that the life and health of a person like you is of consequence to the whole universe. Remember the siotic nerve."

"The what nerve?" says I.

"Siotic," says he. "That nerve which is so tender in very pious people. They say that the Pope has been suffering agonies with it."

"Dear me," says I, "is it anything mixed up with a heart disease?"

"Not at all; it is a strain upon the great sensitive nerve that runs like a whip-cord from I don't know where down the back of the le—"

Oh! sisters, he almost had that terrible word out, but I gave such a start and blushed so that he turned it right round on his tongue, and says he with great emphasis, "limb."

"Oh!" says I, with a gasp of relief, "now you speak so that a modest New England woman can understand. So there is a nerve!"

"Peculiarly susceptible in religious and intellectual persons," says he.

"Running down the limb!" says I.

"Both limbs," says he, "which a weight carried on the lap is sure to exasperate if it does not end in kinking up the siotic and crippling the l—limbs."

"Are you a doctor?" says I.

He smiled.

"A sort of one," says he, and, without more words, he took my satchel and sat it down by his, under the seat, as sociable as could be.

After that, he took hold of my hand, as if he was a-going to feel my pulse, looking sweetly anxious.

"Is there a siotic there?" says I.

He gave my hand a hard squeeze, and seemed to ruminate.

"It takes a little time to discover," says he, half closing his eyes. "Be tranquil; there is no danger now. The arm has been in one position rather too long; change was necessary. But this is a change."

Then he gave my hand another squeeze, and, leaning back, shut his eyes entirely.

That minute the engine gave out a sharp yell that nearly scared me to death. The cars heaved a jerk and a jolt, the man on the platform sung out something, and before I could say Jack Robinson, my fellow-passenger made a dive under the seat, dragged out his satchel, and made for the door, bowing as he went, and hustling out something about its being his station.

While I was a-staring after him with all the eyes in my head, the cars gave another jerk, and, splash-bang, away we went, so fast that the man scooting along that platform, waving his hand backwards, seemed to be swimming in fog.

Sisters, I must say that a feeling of lonesomeness fell upon me after he went; his conversation had been so scientific and interesting that I felt the loss.

Besides that, I felt a little hungry, and thought I'd take a bite of something to eat. So I stooped down, lifted the satchel to my lap, and tried to open it.

The lock, it seemed to me, had got a stubborn twist, and wouldn't open; just then the conductor came along, and I gave him a pitiful look.

"Please, sir, help me a little," says I; "it won't open all I can do."

The conductor came forward, snatched hold of the satchel, and wrenched it open.

"Thank you," says I, lifting my eyes to his gaze, and diving my hand down into the satchel, for I meant to give him a doughnut for his politeness; but instead of that luscious cake, my hands sank into a half peck of sawdust packed close in the satchel my fellow-passenger had left behind.

"Look there," says I; "isn't it dreadful, and I an unprotected female?"

"Was your money in the bag?" asks the conductor.

"No," says I, putting one hand up to my bosom, to make sure it was safe. "I always keep my money where—no matter, the—the handsome upstart will have a splendid feast of turnovers and doughnuts, besides a lively drink of cider; but as for money, that is in a safe place."

"And your ticket?"

"That," says I, "not being private property, like money, is kept handier."

With that, I took the ticket from inside of my glove and handed it to him.

"All right," says he, "the scamp hasn't made so much of a haul as he expected."

"But he'll have a sumptuous meal," says I, a little down in the mouth; for I was growing hungry, and not a bite left. Just then a boy came into the cars with a basketful of popped corn on his arm. It looked awfully tempting, for every kernel was turned wrong side out, white as snow. I bought a popped corn of the boy, and pacified myself with that till the cars stopped ten minutes, where there was a mean chance to get something more substantial to eat. I went in with the crowd, helter skelter; wrestled my way to a long counter, got a cup of tea which I swallowed scalding hot, and, after a hard struggle for it, carried a wedge of custard pie off with the palm of my hand for a plate, and skivered back to the cars, nibbling it as I ran; for the bell was ringing and the conductor yelling "all aboard!" so loud that half the passengers went back coughing and choking, and muttering some kind of wickedness as they went.

Well, all the rest of my car ride was just like this, only once in a while a little more so, till I got onto the Sound. There a great large steamboat, a quarter of a mile long, took a part of us in, and carried us right out to sea.

HELL GATE.

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I was just a little disappointed in that roaring element. The air that came above it was salty and light, and the

waves sparkled beautifully, but they did not rage worth a cent. Still the shores away off on both sides looked dreamy, and we cut through the water so swift that it made me dizzy.

Two or three stylish sort of men seemed as if they were hankering to speak to me as I sat there all alone on deck; but I didn't seem to see it, and they contented themselves with looking at me as if I was the most cruel creature on earth; which I meant to be. The loss of one satchel full of doughnuts and things is as much as I can afford on one trip.

By and by that part of the ocean we travelled on kept growing narrower and narrower, till you could see houses on both shores, and splendiferous houses they were, with great meadows a-sloping down to the water; tall trees shading them, and bushes growing together in clumps. Some were of stone, some of wood, with pointed roofs and cupolas, and great wide stoops, in which you could see people sitting and moving about. Some with spy-glasses in their hands, a-watching us sweep by them like a house afire.

I felt lonesome and almost homesick, but for all that the sight was exhilarating—very.

"Haven't we got almost to New York," says I to the captain; "it seems to me as if the sea was shutting in."

"Oh, we are almost there," says he, "close on to Hell Gate now."

"To what?" says I, almost hopping from the stool I sat on.

"Hell Gate," says he.

"Oh, mercy! you don't tell me it is so bad as that? I knew York was an awful wicked place, but I didn't think an innocent missionary would have to go in it through that gate!"

"It is a little dangerous for sail crafts," says he, smiling, I suppose, to comfort me; "but you are safe. We shall go through with a rush."

I caught my breath.

"But supposing *He* were on the watch?"

"*He!* Who?"

"Don't ask me; I'd rather not mention his name, being a female who abhors profanity."

All at once the captain's eyes began to sparkle as if he were just longing for a tussle with the evil one.

"Don't be afraid," says he, "I reckon we shall make the gate without much trouble. The blasting won't stop us yet awhile."

"Blasting?"

"Yes; they'll have the all-firedest upheave there, before long, that ever tore a hole in the bottom of the sea."

"Blasting! with fire and brimstone?"

"And nitro-glycerine," says he, as calm as skim milk.

"And you mean to take this big steamboat right through it with me on board?"

He laughed right there in my frightened and pale face.

"I really don't know any other way to reach New York," says he.

"Let me ashore," says I, a starting up, "me and my hair-trunk; I don't care for the produce; it may serve to cool their tongues down there. But put me and my hair trunk on any land. It is all I ask."

"It's impossible," says he.

"But I won't go through that in—that awful gate," says I.

"Why, we are in it now; don't you see the whirl of the waters?"

"In it now. Oh, mercy!"

I fell down upon my seat, and buried my face in my shawl, shaking from head to foot.

Sisters, that cruel man laughed. O, how hardened he must have got, going through that sulphurious gate.

"I say, madam, there is no danger, we are almost through now."

"Is *he* there? Have you seen anything of his blasting hosts?" says I under my breath. "Do they mean to fire up just yet?"

"No, no, we are all safe. Quite through—New York is in sight."

I let my shawl drop a little, and peeped out. There was no sign of a gale; the water was a little bubbly and rough, as if it had been rushing through a race-way, but that was all. That captain of ours must have been on good terms with the old serpent that keeps the gate, or he never could have got through so easy. Now that it was over, I almost wished I had found grit enough to see how it was done. As it was, my eyes were hid, and I did not even see the awful old gate.

Well, at last I rose up slowly and looked forward. There was New York City, right before me; just one pile of roofs and walls with cupolas, pointed fronts, and steeples; looking through the smoky haze acres and acres of houses, miles and miles—a whole island laid down with stone. All around it, just as far as I could see, the water was thick with ships, steamboats, and small boats, all flying up and down and across, like living things, each with an errand of its own.

There, along the edges of the city, was what seemed to me like a forest of dead trees, without a leaf or a sign of greenness upon them.

"Well," says the captain, "you see that we have run the gate. Never been here before, I reckon?"

"No, never," says I, "and hope I never shall be again."

"I thought things seemed a little green," says he.

"From the Green Mountains," says I.

"Exactly," says he. "Well, how do you like the looks of the city?"

"Hazy," says I; "dry as tinder. All stone walls, and too many dead trees about for my notion."

"Dead trees? I have never seen any," says he, a-looking around.

"Must be awful short-sighted," says I. "Just look down there; it is like a burnt faller."

He looked ahead where my finger was pointing, and laughed right out.

"Why, that is the shipping," says he.

"Shipping," says I. "Don't tell me that! I wasn't brought up in the woods not to know tree trunks when I see them, dead or alive."

"But I assure you those are the masts of vessels. You can see the hulls now."

I did see the hulls, and felt dreadfully; what would the captain think of me! At once I looked up.

"Yes," says I. "There is no question about it. Those are the hulls of ships, and the others are masts; but I was right."

He laughed: "But you said they were dead trees."

"Just so. Isn't a mast made out of a tree?"

"Certainly."

"And isn't the tree dead before it can be made into a mast?"

"Why, yes," says he, and now it was his turn to be down in the mouth.

"Well, then, isn't the edge of the water there chuck full of dead trees?"

At first the captain sort of choked a little; but the next minute he burst out a laughing.

"Do you want to know my opinion?" says he.

"Well, rather," says I.

"Well, it's this: Green Mountain or not, if anybody buys a certain lady I know of for a fool, he'll get awfully taken in."

"Shouldn't wonder," says I.

With that, I picked up my umbrella, tied my bonnet a little tighter, took my bandbox in one hand, and followed the crowd across a plank bridge, and got into about the dirtiest road that my foot ever trod on.

"Want a carriage? Want a carriage?" I never saw men more polite than the drivers with whips were. It seemed as if they couldn't do enough for me. It really was a strife which should take me in his carriage. Their attentions really were flattering. It was like a welcome in this strange place.

It was like being in a little room all cushioned seats and windows when I got into the great double carriage so kindly offered me.

The cushions were soft as down, and gave so, when I seated myself, that I couldn't help catching my breath. "Where to," says the driver, a-leaning through the window.

"First," says I, "if it won't be too much trouble, I will go somewhere and buy a new satchel; I really don't feel at home without one. Then you may take me to a boarding-house in Bleecker Street. You'll know where it is by inquiring about a little. The name is Smith, and they come from Vermont. Their daughter married and settled on Sprucehill. Smith. You can't help but find them."

"Have you got a number?" says the man.

"No," answers I, "only one family."

"But the house."

"No," says I again. "I haven't got any house, but the old homestead on Sprucehill."

"But Bleecker is a long street."

"Is it?"

"And I must have a number."

"Why, isn't one street of a name enough?" says I, getting out of patience. "What on earth do you want?"

"I want the name of the people."

"Smith."

"And the number of the house they live in."

"Oh, then, houses go by numbers, not names, here in York, do they? Stop a minute!"

Here I took a slip of paper from my pocket-book which Smith's daughter had written, and gave it to him.

"All right," says he, hopping up the wheel, and going to his seat. Then away we rolled, genteel as could be.

I bought the satchel at a store we drove by, and then we went on and on and on, till at last he stopped before a brick house with a good deal of iron about it.

The driver jumped down, ran up the steps, pulled a rusty knob fastened to the door stone, and faced round towards his horses.

A girl I should consider as hired help opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Smith at home?" says I, a-putting my head out of the window.

"Yes," says she.

"I'll get out," says I.

The driver unfolded a lot of steps that had been hid away under the windows. I went down them with a genteel trip. The man had been so polite, I stopped to thank him.

"Three dollars," says he, a holding out his hand.

"Three dollars? What for?" says I, all in a flutter.

"For bringing you here," says he. "Stopping on the way, and so on."

"But you invited me."

The fellow grinned, and held out his hand harder than ever. The help on top of the steps giggled.

"Come, look sharp, I can't wait all day," says he, as pert as a fox.

"Well," says I; "being an unprotected female in a strange place, I can't help myself, I guess; but they do sell politeness awful dear in York. It must be scarce."

I gave him three dollars without another word, feeling like a robbed princess as I did it. Then I took the bandbox and new satchel in my hand, and walked into Smith's boarding-house, about the homesickest creature that ever bore a cross.

II.

PHŒMIE'S FIRST VISIT.

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SISTERS:—Some of you must remember my cousin Emily Elizabeth Frost, that married a Dempster ten years ago when most of us were little mites of things sewing our over-and-over seams. She was a smart creature enough, and as her mother was a proper, nice woman, it was reasonable to hope that she could be depended on to bring up her children; for her father was a deacon in the church, and her mother just the salt of the earth. Well, as soon as I got settled in my boarding-house, I took it into my head to go and see Cousin Elizabeth. She hadn't been to Vermont lately, and I'd rather lost track of her; so I gave one morning to hunting her up.

Some useful things can be found in a great city like this. Now, I tell you, amongst them is a great, fat dictionary, crowded full of names, where everybody that keeps a decent house sets down the number, which is a convenience for strangers like me.

I found the name of Cousin Elizabeth's husband, who keeps a bank somewhere down town, the book said, and got into the first street car that went towards the Central Park. After a while I got out and hunted up the number, feeling awfully anxious, for the houses about there were what the papers call palatial—a word we have not much use for in our parts. I just stopped on the other side of the street and took a general survey before I attempted to go in, feeling more and more fidgety every minute, for that house just took me down with its sumptuousness. Such great windows, with one monstrous pane in a sash, and lace and silk and tassels

shining through! The front was four stories high and ended off with the steepest roof you ever saw, just sloping back a trifle, and flattening off at the top, with windows in it, and all sorts of colors in the shingles, which they call "tiles" here. Then the stone steps wound up to a platform with a heavy stone railing on each side, and a great shiny door, sunk deep into the wall, was wide open, and beyond it was one of glass, frosted over like our windows on a snapping cold morning, and under my feet was a checkered marble floor. I found the knob of a bell sunk into the door jamb, and pulled it a little, feeling half-scared to death. Then I just stepped in and waited in front of the glass door.

A colored person of remarkably genteel appearance opened the door, and gave me a look from head to foot that riled the old Adam in my bosom; then he muttered something about the basement; but I put him down with just that one lift of my finger.

"Is my cousin, Mrs. Dempster, at home?" says I.

"I—I'll inquire," says he, as meek as Moses; "walk in."

Walk in I did.

"Have you a card?" says he.

"No," says I; "as a general thing cards ain't desirable among relations, nor moral under any circumstances with religious friends. Say that Miss Frost is here—Miss Phœmie Frost, from the State of Vermont. No cards!"

The fellow opened a door on one side of the hall, and I went through. Don't expect me to describe that room. It isn't in me to give the least idea of it. Great chunks of glass like the hub of a wheel, with crooked spokes of glass starting every way from it, and what seemed like hundreds of icicles

falling from them, dropped down from the ceiling. When the negro opened the blinds and let in a drift of sunshine, they turned into a snarl of rainbows that fairly blinded me. Then there was a carpet soft as spring grass in a meadow, and bright as a flower-garden; chairs shining with gold and silk; marble women, white as milk, with not a thing on worth speaking of, and looking-glasses half as large as our spring ponds.

I turned my looks away from the women without clothes, while that colored person was by; but gave them a skimpy peep or two the minute he was gone. Really, it was dreadful. I would not have believed such things of Cousin Elizabeth.

Oh mercy on me! while I was looking, in came a gentleman, who bowed, and took a chair, and sat smiling on those creatures just as if he was used to it. Talk of blushing —my face was one blaze of fire.

While I was wondering what I should do, a girl, or what ought to have been a little girl, came sidling into the room, gave me a look as if I'd been a dog in the wrong place, and went up to the gentleman.

"Mamma will be down directly, and has sent me to entertain you," says she, shaking out her short skirts, and almost sitting down on the crimpy hair that half covered them behind. "Ah! I see you are admiring our crouching Venus. Lovely, isn't it? The curving lines are so perfect. The limbs—have you observed the foreshortening of that limb?"

The foreshortening of that limb? Mercy on me, I couldn't stand it. Another minute and I should have boxed her ears, for all the blood that burned in my face went tingling down

to my fingers. That was too much; so I up and said I would call again, and marched right out of the house. Girls indeed!

III.

ABOUT GIRLS.

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DEAR SISTERS:—You ask a puzzling and painful question—What kind of girls do the children I write about make?

My dear friends, girls—modest, rosy, bright-eyed school-girls, such as you are a-thinking of—are scarce as hen's teeth in this great city, and not to be found in profuseness anywhere. They went out with pink calico sun-bonnets, and ain't likely to come in again yet awhile, I tell you! Republican institutions can be carried to a great extent; and our young ones have found it out, and trample down all the good, wholesome old fashions before their little feet quite get out of baby shoes. At this moment I can't find a girl of twelve years old that don't know a thousand times more than her mother, and wouldn't attempt to teach law to her father if he was a judge in the Supreme Court. Yet, it's a shocking truth, the little upstarts don't know how to read like Christians, or spell half their words. The tip-top fashionable school-marms here are quite above teaching such common things as reading and spelling, and turn up their noses at any study that hasn't some "ology" or "phy" at the end of it.