Rapid #: -21309641

CROSS REF ID: **1658027**

LENDER: **INTARCHIVE (Internet Archive) :: Main Library**

BORROWER: **NUI (University of Iowa) :: Main Library**

TYPE:	Article CC:CCL
JOURNAL TITLE:	Resources for American literary study
USER JOURNAL TITLE:	Resources for American literary study.
ARTICLE TITLE:	'Hepzibah's Story': An Unpublished Work by Constance Fenimore Woolson
ARTICLE AUTHOR:	Robert Gingras
VOLUME:	10
ISSUE:	
MONTH:	
YEAR:	1980
PAGES:	33-45
ISSN:	0048-7384
OCLC #:	43626887

Processed by RapidX: 9/21/2023 9:01:28 PM

Internet Archive Interlibrary Loan Fulfillment

Request on Friday, September 22nd, 2023
Resources for American Literary Study 1971-2002
0048-7384
'Hepzibah's Story': An Unpublished Work by Constance Fenimore Woolson
Robert Gingras
volume 10 year 1980
pages 33-45

Response from Internet Archive from: https://archive.org/details/sim_resources-for-american-literary-study_spring-1980_10_1
We hope this is helpful.

"I'm tracking your interlibrary loans ... ooo,
the truck just hit a pothole in Poughkeepsie."

Did we make your day? Tweet us @internetarchive

Please explore the Internet Archive!

- Archive Scholar for fulltext search of over 25 million research articles
- https://archive.org/details/inlibrary and OpenLibrary.org for books to borrow
- Archive-it.org for library curated web collections
- Audio, software, TV News, and the Wayback Machine as well.

The Internet Archive is a non-profit library with a mission to provide Universal Access to All Knowledge.

info@archive.org

300 Funston Avenue - San Francisco - California - 94118 - www.archive.org

"Hepzibah's Story": An Unpublished Work by Constance Fenimore Woolson

ROBERT GINGRAS
Bainbridge Junior College

Of the many regional writers of the late nineteenth century, few presented more varied locales in their fiction than Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894), a grandniece of James Fenimore Cooper. Born in New Hampshire, but raised in Cleveland, Woolson was for the greater part of her adult life an unlocalized soul. She set her earliest short stories and her first novel *Anne* (1882) in the Upper Midwest, presenting in these works careful portraits of the regional characters and detailed descriptions of the picturesque settings of the Great Lakes area. A six-year residence in the South in the 1870s provided further local color material for her short stories and for her novels *For the Major* (1883), *East Angels* (1886), *Jupiter Lights* (1889), and *Horace Chase* (1894). The remaining fourteen years of her life were spent in Europe, where she portrayed in her short stories the influence of the Old World on American expatriates. Praised by her contemporaries E. C. Stedman, William Dean Howells, and Henry James,[1] Woolson is primarily remembered today as one of the first Northern writers to depict in her fiction the Reconstruction South.

Because of her almost nomadic existence and a paucity of records, literary historians have had difficulty in constructing an accurate account of Woolson's activities, particularly in the early 1870s. However, the short story which follows provides much needed biographical information and, at the same time, foreshadows many of the characters and themes of Woolson's later work.

"Hepzibah's Story," previously unpublished, is a fifteen-page manuscript included in the Woolson collection at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Stella Gray, the only commentator on the story thus far, suggests that "Hepzibah's Story" is Woolson's first attempt at fiction writing, and that she wrote the tale after the Civil

1. Stedman, for example, wrote to Woolson: "The best short stories since Hawthorne, with American themes and atmosphere, are yours and Bret Harte's." [*Constance Fenimore Woolson*, Vol. II of *Five Generations (1785-1923)*, ed. Clare Benedict (1930; rpt. London: Ellis, 1932), p. 25.] And, even more significantly, James praised Woolson when, in a letter to Howells in 1884, he said, "It is rather hard that as you are the only English novelist I read (except Miss Woolson), I should not have more comfort with you." [*The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), I, 105.]

War but before 1870, when Woolson's first magazine article, "The Happy Valley," appeared in the July issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.[2] Yet "Hepzibah's Story," which is set in Pine City, a fictitious lumber town on the shore of Lake Michigan, contains a direct reference to the great Chicago fire of October 8th and 9th, 1871. Near the end of the tale, a forest fire engulfs the village on the evening of October 8th, and Hepzibah, fleeing to the lake, escapes with a few other villagers in a rowboat. Hepzibah then describes her rescue and arrival on October 10th or 11th (the precise date cannot be determined from the story) in Chicago which is still smoldering from the disastrous blaze:

> We had been picked up by a steamer, and in a few hours we were landed in the ashes of Chicago, and joined the great army of sufferers in Lincoln Park. . . . Aid came, food and clothes from St Louis, Cincinnati and Cleveland, money from New York, and sympathy from all the world.

This reference to the Chicago fire clearly indicates a composition date after 1871. Woolson probably wrote "Hepzibah's Story" shortly after the Chicago disaster so that it could be published while the memory of that fire and other fires that summer and autumn were still fresh in her readers' minds.[3] We do know, at the very least, that Woolson wrote the story before the fall of 1873 because of the address at the head of the manuscript and a notation in her mother's journal. The address—"131 St. Clair St., Cleveland, Ohio"—was that of her residence in Cleveland.[4] Woolson would have to have written "Hepzibah's Story" before the fall of 1873, for in her mother's journal we learn that Woolson left New York City in the autumn of that year with her mother, her sister Clara, and her niece Clare for a trip to the South.[5] Living in northern Florida and the Carolinas until her mother's death in 1879 and thereafter in Europe,

2. "The Literary Achievement of Constance Fenimore Woolson," Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957, p. 152.

3. Due to a severe drought in the Upper Midwest in the summer and early fall of 1871, numerous fires were reported in the region's newspapers. Coinciding with the October 8th fire in "Hepzibah's Story," the Chicago *Tribune* printed lengthy stories on the widespread forest fires in Minnesota and Wisconsin on October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1871.

4. See *Constance Fenimore Woolson*, ed. Clare Benedict, pp. 29-30. In this letter to her sister-in-law, Harriet Benedict, Woolson mentions that she remembers when she was living on St. Clair Street, shortly after her father had died, that she was encouraged in her writing by Miss Benedict's father, George A. Benedict.

5. See *Voices Out of the Past*, Vol. I of *Five Generations (1785-1923)*, ed. Clare Benedict (London: Ellis, 1929), p. 222.

Woolson never again returned to Cleveland. Thus, we can conclude that Woolson wrote "Hepzibah's Story" between the fall of 1871 and the fall of 1873; however, the exact date of composition is impossible to determine. Woolson does not mention "Hepzibah's Story" in any of her letters which exist today, and there is no record of her having submitted the story for publication.

The Cleveland address, while giving an approximate date of composition for "Hepzibah's Story," also adds another piece to the puzzle of Woolson's whereabouts between the winter of 1871 and the fall of 1873. After publication of her first travel sketches in the summer of 1870, Woolson moved to New York City, and between December 24, 1870 and February 4, 1871, her letters to George A. Benedict, the editor of the *Daily Cleveland Herald*, were published in the *Herald* and its *Supplement*. However, following the publication of her last letter, we lose track of Woolson's activities until we read her mother's journal entry of the family's trip to the South in the fall of 1873. "Hepzibah's Story," with its Cleveland address at the head of the manuscript, indicates that Woolson did not remain in New York City until the fall of 1873, but rather that she returned to Cleveland. Unfortunately, the dates and length of her visit still cannot be determined today.

In addition to the light "Hepzibah's Story" sheds on Woolson's personal life, the tale, as one of Woolson's earliest pieces, is significant for the perspective it offers on her later writing. As Gray has noted, Hepzibah, with her "thin yellow hair" and "drawn look," is a departure from the typically young and beautiful heroines of her day.[6] But Hepzibah is the first in a long line of Woolson's older, plain-looking heroines whose patience, integrity, and stoic self-denial are firmly rooted in their New England heritage. Her story of unfulfilled love and self-sacrifice is often repeated in later tales, and clearly illustrates that magnanimity and unrequited love—two of Woolson's most frequent themes—were lifelong concerns. In addition, the sentimental quality of the work is characteristic of many of Woolson's stories of love. Here, Hepzibah, after ten years of separation from Theodore, travels alone across half a continent only to find that he loves another woman. Quietly giving up her own hope for marriage, she returns home to her "graves . . . under the red maple leaves . . . ."

But while these elements are characteristic of Woolson's later fiction, her handling of the story's setting is not. The Northern locale obviously foreshadows Woolson's use of the Great Lakes area in

6. Gray, p. 155.

subsequent works; however, and quite surprisingly, Woolson does not highlight the local color material in the story. Pine City is simply described as a "small settlement gathered around the sawmills," with a "row of white houses," a "long dock," and "great trees . . . stretching down to the water's edge." At this early point in her literary career, Woolson makes no attempt to capture the flavor of life in this rough outpost, as she would so effectively in such later stories as "Peter the Parson" and "The Lady of Little Fishing," both published in September, 1874.

Editorial Method

Because of its neatness and fine penmanship, "Hepzibah's Story" appears to be a fair copy, ready to be submitted to a publisher. However, the manuscript does contain several significant features. Frequently, Woolson used dashes when writing dialogue. When the dash occurs within a single character's speech, Woolson used a short mark which I have represented in the text as a one-em dash closed on both sides. However, Woolson often used a very long mark between the speeches of two or more characters. She may have intended the long dash to indicate a new paragraph, even though in other instances she clearly indented the next line of a character's speech to indicate a new paragraph. I have not tried to second guess Woolson's intentions with regard to the dashes as indicators of new paragraphs, but have simply recorded these long marks as two-em dashes closed on both sides in the printed version of the manuscript. In addition, I have not provided conventional spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in several instances. Contractions such as "don't" and "didn't" are printed as they appear in the manuscript, "do'nt" and "did'nt." The "u" in "uncle" is not capitalized before proper nouns in several places, and is recorded as such. Abbreviations such as "Mrs." and "St." and "Nov." lack a period, and are presented in this manner in the printed text.[7]

Miss C. F. Woolson
131 St. Clair St.
Cleveland
Ohio

7. I am indebted to Rollins College, as owners of "Hepzibah's Story," for permission to publish this manuscript. I would also like to thank Professors Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., of Florida State University and Cary D. Ser of Rollins College for their assistance in preparing this article.

Hepzibah's Story

I came to Pine City in the spring. The farmhouse seemed lonely after father's death, and Eastown was like one of those lava buried cities described in the books on Uncle George's shelf; he often read aloud to us in winter evenings. As long as Annis and Uncle George were with us, father and I were contented on the farm, and even when we looked at the row of graves on the hill side, mother, James and the babies, we did not feel sorrowful because we knew they were happy in heaven, and as regards ourselves, we were willing to be happy on earth as long as we stayed. Annis was my sister, a gentle girl fair as a lily, and Uncle George who had been everywhere and knew everything, dropped in upon us one fall evening and never left us again; he was the life of the house and told us strange tales of his adventures in the tropical seas, the Crimson Sea, the Pearl Sea, and the Golden Sea, I do'nt know exactly where they are, for I have not studied geography since I was a child. Those were happy days, but I had my burden all the same. Sometimes I had to carry it through a slough of despond or up a hill of difficulty, but I always hoped to throw it down and reach Paradise at last; I trust it was not sinful to liken my engagement to a burden and Paradise to Theodore, I could not help it, I loved him so. Theodore was Squire Harris' son and lived at Apple Hill farm. We were of the same age and played together as children forgetting we were no longer children until one day we discovered that we were lovers. Squire Harris died and left debts behind, Apple Hill farm was sold, and Theodore went west to start life with an uncle up in the lumber country on Lake Michigan; he was to come for me as soon as he was able, and in the meantime, I stayed at home and lived on hope. Then came the war, and before I knew it, Theodore had enlisted in one of those fine regiments from the lumber country, not a man in it under six feet, so the papers said after most of them were killed at Pittsburg Landing. Theodore however was not injured and served through the whole war; I was proud of my soldier boy, but the time was long and my heart grew sore with anxious waiting. At length came peace. Of course we could not be married then, for I had only my share in the farm, and Theodore had nothing; so he took off his uniform and went back to Pine City, and I stayed with father. That made five years since I had seen him. The next winter Uncle George died, a ne'er to do well, the neighbors called him, but very dear to me. Then Annis faded away slowly, and one summer when the day lilies were in bloom, she went to heaven. Father and I were left in the farm house, and gradually he grew bed-ridden and as dependent on me as a child. Those years

were dark, but of course I would not leave father, and I thought it was very generous of Theodore to do without me so long. In the early spring when the snow was melting off from the green winter wheat, father died, an old man of seventy. I remember wondering whether mother knew him right away, with his stooping shoulders and white hair; mother was only twenty five.

I came home from the funeral and sat down by the hearth to think. I asked the neighbors to give me an hour by myself, and when it was over, I had decided what to do. I sold the farm the next day for less than its worth rather than have any delay, and turning all the property into cash, I started for Pine City, leaving behind me with sadness the row of graves and the lonely house, but looking forward with hope to a joyful meeting with Theodore, the gift of God, Uncle George said that was the meaning of the name, and truly he was a heavenly gift to me. The journey was long, but I arrived safely in Chicago at last, and found a boat ready to start for Pine City, and as the coasters made the trip only once a week, I could not help thinking it was a good sign that I happened to come on the very day. I had written to Theodore from home telling my plans. I intended to buy a little farm at Pine City with my money, and I had asked him to find one suitable for me. I said "us," but crossed it out, of course the farm was for him, but you know girls always like to have it look as though they were being forced into it.

At length the Union started, a queer little propeller that carried the mails and supplies up the coast; the lumber all went by vessel. I was the only passenger the first day, but the next morning a party came on board from Beachville, a man and his wife, two young men and a girl whom they called Rose, a dimpled bright eyed child of sixteen, who sat on the deck and smiled all the time, not with any particular meaning, but just as the canary bird sings, because she could not help it. The married woman, Rose's sister, seemed to be trying to help the dark eyed young man named John Davis; both of the young men were evidently devoted to Rose, and she smiled evenly on the two. When John was away, I thought Fred was the favored one, but when Fred was not there, I was sure it was John. I could not help hearing much that was said; they did not seem to notice me and at last I began to wonder why it was. I decided it must be because western people are so free in their manners; in New England we should call them bold. That night when we were at supper in the cabin I happened to look into a glass opposite the table, and there I saw the reflection of two faces. One was rosy and dimpled, lit up with dark eyes and white teeth, surrounded by a waving mass of dark curls, and well set on a round throat with a white neck

just showing above a gay plaid dress. The other was worn and pale, with light eyes and thin yellow hair tied back in a little knot behind; the mouth had a drawn look and the black dress could not hide the ends of the collar bones, nor the bit of crape the sinews of the throat. For the first time I noticed that I had grown old, and that the years of waiting had taken away my youth and good looks, for I was good-looking once, never rosy perhaps, but with plenty of yellow hair and eyes as blue as the old fashioned china, so Theodore used to say. Down in New England I was never called thin, the women there are generally spare, but some way the western girls were all fat; something in the air I suppose. "Ten years. It is a long time," I thought as I sat on the deck that evening. "I wonder if Theodore has changed too. But no matter how old and worn he is, he will always look the same to me. He has had a hard lonely life, poor boy; but I am bringing him ease and comfort. How glad he will be to see me!" Early the next morning we reached Pine City, a small settlement gathered around the sawmills; back on the ridge there was a row of white houses, a long dock ran out into the lake, and on all sides stood the woods, the great trees so close together that I could not see between them, stretching down to the water's edge and closing round the clearing like a well. As the Union came in, people hurried down to meet her. I stood at the bow with my heart beating loudly, watching for Theodore. "There's Thody," said Rose Linn, who was leaning over the railing with John and Fred on either side. Even at that moment I wondered how the girl could so belittle the grand name of Theodore, and vaguely wondered who her "Thody" could be, but I forgot everything as I saw in the group on shore the tall figure of my lover, grown broad and brown and bearded, but Theodore still. In another moment he had leaped on board and I held on by the railing to keep myself from falling, I felt so faint. Then I saw his head out of the cabin door, he came forward, and shook that girl's hand. "I thought you would come to day, Miss Rose," he said, taking the cap off his curly brown hair; how well I remembered that hair. The girl blushed, looked up timidly, looked down consciously, and then the party moved off together, leaving me standing there alone. I followed slowly, and when I got to the narrow stairs, Theodore was last. I touched him on the shoulder. "Theodore, do'nt you remember me? It is Hepzibah, dear. I have come so far,—I am so tired,—I have brought you all the money,—I could say no more, everything grew dark and I fainted away. When I came to, I was on a sofa in a pleasant room, a gray haired woman was bending over me, and Theodore stood on the other side. I felt so glad and peaceful that I shut my eyes again; it was enough to know that he was there.

"Dear Hepzibah, did you take this long journey for me? Poor Hepzibah, how tired you look," said Theodore stroking my hair gently. Then, after a pause, "why did you not write and tell me you were coming?"——"I did write before I left home, Theodore."

"Then the letter must have been lost. How is your father now?"——"Oh Theodore, Theodore, did'nt you know he was dead?" And then with a great burst of crying I told him all, my weary waiting, the three deaths, the lonely house, the long journey, and taking out a pocketbook I whispered, "for you, dear; for our new home." He drew me close, I laid my tired head on his shoulder, and forgot all the pain and trouble in the great happiness that was mine at last.

The summer passed quickly, full of pleasant labor. I spent a few weeks with Theodore's Aunt Betsy, to whose home I had been carried when I first arrived, but as soon as we bought our house I moved into it, taking with me an old Indian woman part servant, part companion; those French half-breeds are full of life and wit, you know. Theodore wanted to be married immediately, but I had set my heart upon the ninth of October for our wedding day, his birthday and mine, and besides, there was much to do before the house could be comfortable, and I had everything to learn about western ways and western housekeeping. I do'nt mind confessing, too, that I was very happy as I was. After ten years of lonely waiting it was pleasant to be urged, pleasant to refuse, when I knew that a few months at farthest would bring the wedding day; uncle George used to say "sip the cup of pleasure slowly,"—I was slow about mine that summer. I wanted to enjoy every drop.

One August afternoon I went to a sewing bee. I had not mixed much with the people of Pine City, I did not care for society, but that day I went because Mrs Brown had helped me in my garden and besides, she was my nearest neighbor. The room was full and everybody was talking. I took a seat in a corner and began to work, but as I was a stranger I kept silent. More company came, the crowd increased, and as the chairs were moved closer together I was quite hidden in my corner. I sat sewing, full of my own thoughts when a name aroused me.

"Rose Linn? Oh yes, she has broken with John Davis after all, and no one knows the reason either; we all thought it was a settled thing. But then, you know, she always had a fancy for Thody Harris; for my part, I used to think last winter that"——"Hush, hush," whispered another lady, "Miss Atkins is behind us."——I smiled to myself at the idea of that child's fancying my Theodore. That was the reason, then, that he took so much pains to welcome her, on board the Union; he had noticed her silly little liking and felt sorry for her.

Theodore was always so kind hearted.

That same evening he begged hard to be married the next week. "Do, Hepzibah, do say yes," he said earnestly. I made some excuse, but seizing my hands he cried out, "you try me too far; Hepzibah, you must consent. Let us be married immediately and then we can begin a new life with new determination, new patience and new hope."——"We shall not need new love, Theodore; our love is old and faithful, dear." He dropped my hands and walked across the floor; then coming back he said, "but you will consent, Hepzibah; you must consent. There is more in it than you think,—I cannot endure this life any longer. Are you not afraid?"——"Of what, dear?"——

"Of—of some change."——"Do not fear, Theodore. I did not change in ten years, and I love you more than ever now." But I would not give up. I had set my heart on October, and the Atkins were always an obstinate family. After Theodore had gone, I enjoyed thinking over all he had said. If Rose Linn could only have heard him!

For three weeks after this, all went quietly. Theodore said no more about our marriage; he was working hard in the mill and looked tired and care worn. I urged him to take a rest; "you know I have money laid by, Theodore," I said one evening.

"I do'nt want your money," he answered roughly; then, as I looked up in astonishment, he added, "I beg your pardon, Hepzibah, but you must keep your money for yourself. I am not marrying you for money."

"I know that, dear; it would be just the same if I had not a cent," I said, my eyes full of happy tears. "Just the same," answered Theodore gravely.

One warm September day we went with a picnic party up the beach to Moss Grove. In the afternoon a row boat joined us full of late comers. "Why, there is Rose Linn; I did'nt know she was home," said one.——"She has only been away three weeks; I thought she was going to stay all winter," said another.——As the boat grated on the beach, Theodore came up; "let us go to the great rock, Hepzibah," he said in a low tone, "and get away from these chattering tongues." It was a pleasant place and I went gladly; I liked to be alone with Theodore, and we sat on the rock and looked off over the water for an hour or two. The trees shut off the people, after a while a row boat passed below us, but no one disturbed us, until a woman's scream rang out in the air. I looked down at the boat and saw somebody fall over the side; in one moment a man had leaped over after the struggling form, in two, they were both lifted on board

again. "They are safe," I said with a long breath, "how could they be so careless." But when I turned, Theodore was like a stone. He had risen, his eyes were fixed on the boat, his face white as a sheet, and his hands clenched. He did not hear me when I spoke, and frightened at his look, I tried to loosen his neck tie. With a jerk he threw me off, and rushed away into the woods. Much alarmed I followed as well as I could through the undergrowth, and after a long time I found him at the foot of a rock, his face hidden in his hands.

"They are safe, they are safe, dear," I said kneeling beside him; "you are as tender hearted as a child."

"She might have been drowned," he answered hoarsely, without looking up.

"She? Who was it then, dear?"

"Did'nt you see who it was," said Theodore savagely, rising and walking rapidly back through the woods towards the shore.——"No dear; I did not notice. But you are tired; let us slip away and go home."——

The next day I asked Aunt Betsy who it was that fell into the lake.——"Rose Linn, I believe."——"Theodore was so overcome he almost fainted; you know he is as tender-hearted as a child."——"Is he," said Aunt Betsy, and she gave me such a queer look that I could not forget it all day.——"It must be that the child likes Theodore, and every body in Pine City knows it," I thought as I lay awake that night, and I actually got up and lit a candle to look at myself in the glass. The same pale face looked out from the pine frame, the same light eyes and drawn mouth. "What nonsense," I thought as I blew out the light; "I should love Theodore if his hair was white and his eyes dim with age. A little flesh and red blood cannot alter the love of years." But I could not sleep.

The two weeks flew along, our house was ready, the new furniture in place, the flowers in the window, and my wedding dress, a black silk, hung in the closet. On Friday Theodore was taken ill, a nervous fever the doctor said; Aunt Betsy and I took care of him, but on Saturday night he became delirious and began talking wildly. Uncle Peter would not let me stay although I begged and even cried; he took me by the arm and led me downstairs, while Aunt Betsy locked the door inside. I could hear Theodore's voice calling, "why do'nt she come? Where is she?"——I struggled to get away from uncle Peter. "Do'nt you hear, he is calling me; let me go," I cried angrily. "If you disturb him now, you may kill him," said the old man gravely; "come home, poor girl, and try to sleep." The next day, Sunday, Theodore was much better; I sat by his bedside, he scarcely spoke, but looked at me so kindly that I was content. Towards eve-

ning I said, "of course, dear, our marriage must be put off until you are better." He lifted himself up, his eyes shone and the fever spots came back into his cheeks. "Not a day, not an hour, Hepzibah," he said; "if I am strong enough we will be married at our house at noon tomorrow, just as we intended, if not, we will be married here." He sank back and closed his eyes. I did not refuse. I wanted to have him to myself and nurse him into health again. At nine o'clock the doctor gave him an opiate, and after watching him fall asleep, I left the house and walked down the road towards home. It was warm, almost sultry, and the wind that came in puffs felt hot against my face. But the air was often close in the village because the woods grew so thick for miles around, and the undergrowth reached up to the branches of the trees; the men cut down what they wanted and left the stumps, there were no roads into the back country, everybody and everything came and went by water. As I passed along people came out of their houses and looked around; they said it was too warm for October, something must be going to happen, one man thought it was an earthquake. There were a good many birds flying about, and the cows in the clearing kept tramping up and down uneasily. All this I noticed, but I was too much excited to think of it; I could think of nothing but my marriage. I fell asleep at last, and dreamed of father; he seemed to be calling and pulling my hand. I woke with a start and found the Indian woman dragging me out of bed; the room was light as day, and throwing on a woolen dress I ran into the street. The woods were on fire at the north and south, the flames came over the tops of the tallest trees like waves over the reeds on the beach; it was all red up in the sky and smoke down below, I could not see the nearest house, the sour pine smoke blinded and scorched my eyes. For a moment I felt like letting it come, it seemed no use to try to do anything; the squaw put her blanket over her head and sat down on the ground rocking herself from side to side and singing some of her queer gibberish. I stood there, half dazed, until suddenly the first flame shot up behind the west woods and lit up the houses on the ridge; I could even see the window of Theodore's room. Rushing through the smoke, falling against the stumps, half suffocated and with bleeding feet I reached Uncle Peter's house at length, and shivering a window with my fists, climbed in and ran to Theodore's room. He was asleep. "Theodore, Theodore, the west woods are on fire, the house will burn, wake up," I cried, shaking him with all my strength. He opened his eyes and stared stupidly around, the opiate had dulled his senses. But the glare of the flames and the strange roar outside aroused him, he threw on some clothes, and I ran to wake the old people still asleep after two nights of

watching. In two minutes we were all out of the house, and none too soon. The west woods were a sheet of flames towering up and curving over us, red as blood.

"It is the last day, the great day of the Lord. Who shall be able to stand," cried a voice through the smoke. The air was full of screams and groans, and the roaring of the fire grew louder; no one can imagine the awful sound. "To the lake," said Uncle Peter, and we started. But suddenly Theodore broke away and ran back up the ridge like a madman. "He is crazy," I screamed, trying to follow him; in vain they dragged me on, I wrenched myself loose and ran into the hot smoke after him. The last trees on the edge of the clearing were burning and the fire stretched across and licked the ridge houses. Some one stood at a window and shrieked; already the back wall of the room was blazing and in the glare I recognized Rose Linn. In another moment I saw Theodore climb up, lift her in his arms and carry her away. I turned and followed them down the road. The fire rained down and blistered my face, my bare feet stepped on hot coals, but my burning eyes kept the two in sight as I ran on. I saw an old man sitting in the door-way of his blazing house; "upon the ungodly he shall rain fire, brimstone and an horrible tempest," he cried as I passed. I stumbled over something; it was a little baby already dead. I saw two children in an upper room holding their dolls up to see the fire, while the flames were climbing up the piazza. Then came the tornado and blew me onward to fall prostrate on the beach. When it had passed, I opened my eyes; Theodore was standing deep in the water, holding the girl in his arms. I waded out, but he did not see me. "Rose, Rose," he cried in heart breaking tones. She opened her eyes, she had only fainted, there was not a scratch upon her. "Is it you, Thody," she said; "did you save me?" "She is not hurt," cried Theodore with the tears rolling down his cheeks, "thank God. My Rose, my darling, my only love, I cannot live without you."

I went back to the beach and passing down, waded out to the dock, the shore end was burning; crawling to the cross beams I sat down with my feet in the water. It was as though I had been struck by lightning. I watched the flames swoop down on the town, I saw the rain of coals, and bowed my head under the hot tornado, I heard the roar of the fire, the fall of the trees and the screams of the sufferers, but I felt nothing. I did not know that I was burned, and I should have sat there forever if some one had not pulled me down into a row boat. As we drifted away, I saw that the whole coast was in flames, then as the gale struck us and blew the boat out into the broad lake, a faintness came over me, and I thought it was death.

I was brought back to my senses by a stinging pain in my hands and feet; opening my eyes I found myself in a state room, my burns bandaged and my head wrapped in a cloth. We had been picked up by a steamer, and in a few hours we were landed in the ashes of Chicago, and joined the great army of sufferers in Lincoln Park. I did not care for life, but there were no means of dying at hand, and my New England religion would not let me seek them. Aid came, food and clothes from St Louis, Cincinnati and Cleveland, money from New York, and sympathy from all the world. With scarred face and lame feet, with clothes provided by charity, with a pass from the mayor and a few dollars from the relief committee, I came back to Eastown to begin the world again. Old friends were kind, the graves were there under the red maple leaves, and—I lived. It is not so easy to die as you would suppose.

I could not write to Theodore immediately, but at last I made myself put down these words; do you think lies are always wicked?

"Dear Theodore: I am back in Eastown. I was not suited to western life; the fire gave me a great fright, I drifted off in a row boat, and was picked up by a steamer. I cannot go back, and you must not be angry at me for breaking our engagement. I suppose the house is burned; if the land is worth anything to you, keep it to please me.

Your friend,

Hepzibah."

Here is the answer.

"Pine City. Nov. 4th

Dear Miss Atkins.

Thody was so glad to get your letter. We thought you were dead. You were last seen going back up the ridge, and we gave you up for lost. Fifty persons were burned and others were drowned. Thody saved my life. He is very well. They are building a new mill. Thody is going to put up a house on his lot. I wish, dear Miss Atkins, that you would come and see us next spring.

Yours with love

Rose Linn Harris."

Enclosed was a sealed envelope containing these words and a slip cut from a newspaper.

"Dear Hepzibah.

I had loved her long, but I conquered my love, until, as I supposed, death took you. Then, I yielded.

Theodore."