THE NEW CENTURY
FOR WOMAN.

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POETRY.

Written for the NEW CENTURY.

TO JEAN INGELOW.

BY CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

Sweetest of singers, by the mossy brook
And daisied field thy carolling is heard,
Thy melodies so perfect that we look
Aloft to see if it is not a bird
That carols thus. Thy words are singing notes,—
We had not thought our common speech could flow
Like showers of music from the swelling throats
Of nightingales; our own we did not know,
Uplifted to thy purposes. We take
Thy inner meanings half unconsciously,
Yet not less deeply, that it was the sake
Of thy enchanting, chiming melody
That brought them to our hearts. O Bird, sing free,—
We listen,—listen,—from across the sea.

THE EXPOSITION.

THE NEW ENGLAND LOG HOUSE.

Only a few steps from the eastern entrance to the Woman's Building is the typical, primitive, New England home. A one-and a-half story, log-house, having a frontage of about twenty-five feet, and a depth of forty feet. Perched above the entrance, on the sloping roof of the low porch or "stoop," is a painted sign, too closely resembling that of an inn for such a building, on which the visitor reads "Ye Olden Time. Welcome to All."

No place is so thronged by all classes of people, from the New England Governor to the native of the "far-out west," to whom it looks more like home than anything he has seen since the 10th of May. So many are the visitors, that a guard is necessary at the door, to prevent the excessive crowding of the rooms. As the crowd passes out at another door there is no very tedious waiting, and there is also the garden to inspect. Some ambitious cord-climbing beans and morning-glories will soon hide the narrow window, where usually stands a pitcher-vase holding a generous bouquet of good old-fashioned flowers. The garden is planted with sunflowers, china-asters, nasturtions, hollyhocks, odorous southern-wood, marigolds, poppies, and bachelor-buttons. A sweet pink droops its heavy head, bursting with fragrance, and the stiff hydrangea blossoms are rapidly changing from green to pink. A single red and a white beet, stand in solitary grandeur, surrounded by flowers and box-wood borders, and sage plants "blossom blue as forget-me-nots," under the front windows, for this is the "front yard." The kitchen garden, not intended as the source of supplies, however, is on the west side of the house, but the variety is good, and the fashion of growth the same as a hundred years ago, for which vegetable permanence let the human family be thankful. Guarded by a flourishing hop vine that finds so good a climbing place on the rough, projecting hemlock logs at the corner of the house, are lettuce, onions, carrots, radishes and green corn, growing as simple and unembarrassed as if in the remotest country district, instead of in the midst of the concentrated pride of the assembled world.

One feels a little disappointed that the logs are sawn smooth at the ends, instead of bearing the marks of the woodman's axe, and that the bark on the logs is not rougher, and that the logs themselves are not larger, but after all, though not as rude as its early prototypes, it will serve as the most entirely American centennial memorial on the ground. For this picture of New England life 100 years ago, the world is indebted to Miss E. D. Southwick, of Boston, who will be remembered by many a former soldier boy with pleasure and gratitude, for help on the battle-field, and relief in the weary days of hospital life. It was four years ago at the Vienna Exposition, seeing the great interest everywhere felt in whatever pertained to simple peasant life, that it occurred to her that just such interest, and more, would be felt in an exhibition of the home life of New England, as it was in the times we celebrate one hundred years ago. There were many obstacles to overcome. It would require no small amount of money, and all of some one's time and attention. Soon after her return from Europe, Miss Southwick set about the work. She found not a few New Englanders who approved her idea, some of them willing to assist. She, however, has had all the supervision, collected such money as was forthcoming, and the relics, supervised the building of the log house, probably the most expensive one on record, it having cost $1600, and was actually obliged to act as foreman some of the time, particularly in the erection of the old-fashioned chimney. In the building of this she was compelled to envelope herself in wraps, and, sitting in the cold, personally and particularly direct the workmen,—when she could get them,—for at that time the demand was greater than the supply,—in the building of the outside chimney, with whose peculiar structure they seemed wholly unacquainted; but it was all done at last, the house finished, the relics collected and arranged, her representative ladies ready with their quaint costumes, and the doors open at the appointed time, May 10th.

To assist her, Miss Southwick has the help of about eighteen ladies, nearly all of whom are from Massachusetts, six of these entertain visitors on alternate days, dressed in costumes like those worn a hundred years ago, as nearly as they could be imitated. The visitor sees "ye ancient dames" spinning wool or flax, churning, tape-weaving, quilting or attending to the traditional England dinner of Boston baked beans, brown bread and boiled vegetables, served at noon each day, and greatly patronized by the crowd of visitors who sit at the square tables in the back porch, in companies of New England family size. They help themselves and each other with a freedom that for the time breaks down all lines of reserve usually observed between strangers, considering themselves during the dinner hour at least, "home-folks;" discussing the growth of the beans, "calculating" how soon they will shade the porch, and quizzing the ladies in attendance on the depth of their collars and the age of the lace that borders them. The inspection of the "front yard" finished, the visitor gazing through the open section of the guarded double door, gets a general view of the "kitchen." On the right an open fire place, is hung with all the ancient variety of chimney furniture, pot-hooks, hangers, trammels, and kettles, great and small; nearer, a flax-wheel, propelled by a woman in high cap and long waisted, brightly colored over-dress. On the left, the great wheel is whirled by a woman, who, in a dress as antique, but more rustic, majestically paces up and down with too much unconcerned dignity for "twenty knots a day," the ancient spinster's "stent"—indeed, the amount on her spindle is suspiciously small; in the farther corner a damsel or two are bending over a patch work quilt. The looking-glass is decorated with a string of red peppers, the fire place with festoons of dried apples and pumpkins, and hams swing from the bare rafters overhead. As the loft extends over only a part of the room, there are yet glimpses of more table supplies, some 1776 clothing and bonnets, hung away probably for the season.

The door opens at last. It was a cradle that so many had gathered about. "Peregrin White was born in that cradle," remarks one of the previously admitted group, who considers herself sufficiently initiated to turn guide. "Who was she?" asks another; but appreciative visitors, mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers, bend over it as reverently as did that father and mother anxiously and lovingly, when rocked by the rolling waves of the harbor, their baby, the first American Puritan, stirred in his sleep, which was scarcely less profound and unconscious than the one he has slept almost two hundred years. The heavy structure—both body and hood are of oak,—is without carving or ornament of any kind except a narrow, smooth ridge or beading. It has lost its polish, and the rockers seem of later date and of poorer material, but as a whole, it is in a good state of preservation and will easily wear out two more Centennials. The cradle is supplied with bedding, and two dolls, a modern waxen one and the other ancient and of home construction, do but spoil the picture that the cradle would suggest if it were tenantless. It is the property of Mrs. Cushman, of Kingston, Massachusetts. To most persons the fireplace is the next point of interest, about the hearth stand two or three children's chairs, attached to its sides are two or three varieties of crane lamps, showing progress in their manufacture, some of them old and some new-fashioned in 1776; a pair of bellows 180 years old hang on one side, a linen holder gorgeously embroidered in blue, 95 years old; a pot lifter, a gridiron and bunches of sweet herbs both for medicinal and cooking purposes. On the "mantel-shelf" are a pewter platter, an ancient foot-rest, a small, square, copper plate, cast in ornamental pattern of open work, provided with two feet, two or three inches high; placed before the fire, it presented a sloping surface convenient for resting cold feet upon. Here also are brass candle-sticks, more iron lamps and a bunch of pine sticks, old time matches, one end of which has been dipped in sulphur.

"What is this?" said a stranger pointing to a box which seemed to contain mere rubbish, "Oh, I know," said a plain, elderly woman, whose hands showed traces of hard work. She seized the box with an exclamation of delight, "It's more than thirty years since I had a tinder box in my hand. Many and many's the time I've built a fire this way." She rolled together the edges of the scorched linen. "I wonder, O, I do wonder if I can strike fire now!" she said excitedly, and the crowd about her, of New Englanders, seemed as eager as herself to see it done. The sparks flew at the first sharp stroke, the little woman springing from the floor like a child in her delight, while the faces about her expressed the most intense enjoyment of the scene, The linen caught the spark, burned encouragingly, but was at last extinguished; again and again she struck the steel, but it refused to answer, and she put the tinder box up sadly, saying, "It is far worn; it won't kindle many more fires," and walked away, her face most pathetic in its unconscious expression of thronging memories. Not unlike this was a scene one day at the Great Wheel. "What are those things that look like curry-combs?" said an elegantly dressed young gentleman, who had been watching the process of spinning, "and what are those long fuzzy strings?" "O, those are cards, to card wool, and the fuzzy strings are rolls," said a woman, whose dress indicated that she was accustomed to old-fashioned work. "There is no wool to card, and no one who knows how to use the cards. They were for the purpose of making these rolls, or substitutes for them," explained "ye ancient spinner," while the country-woman looked as shocked at the ignorance of the elegant young gentleman, as would a metropolitan lady at this woman's comments on Fifth Avenue surroundings. "It's more than forty years since I done it," said she, taking up the cards, "and these haven't been used in so long, they're not fit, but, if you'll give me two or three of them rolls,—" she looked a little abashed at the interested and amused crowd about her, but dexterously "hetcheled" the smooth round rolls between the flat wire brushes, picked it to a homogenous mass, turned it over to the polished wooden back, gave it a few loving pats and deft, rolling motions, and tossed off another fuzzy string, larger but shorter than the rolls. "That's the way we made rolls fifty years ago, in a new country," she said, glancing at the young gentleman, who touched his hat respectfully, and thanked her heartily.

Over the mantelpiece hangs an old flint lock, an ancient powder horn and some slightly battered candle moulds. A turkey wing, ears of corn, more sweet herbs, an almanac, hang on the right of the fireplace. Between and about the andirons, which are very old and were brought from Maine, are iron vessels, used when cooking was done both over and under live coals. One little kettle came over in the second Pilgrim ship.

At the left of the fireplace is a cupboard 145 years old; in it is an assortment of pewter and old blue and white earthern ware, besides wooden ware. On the top of this cupboard is a diminutive churn, 200 years old, and an old lace pillow, the unfinished work still upon it, the needle still hanging as when last used by Elizabeth Dutch, of Ipswich, in 1720; a very old, perforated wooden ladle, and a tin dinner horn,—the last 150 years old. On the right of the fireplace hangs a basket with separate compartments for knives and forks, a fish basket, and a steel-yard for weighing. "Won't you let me see you work this tape loom?" said an old gentleman, picking up from the hearth something that slightly resembled a small wooden shovel, the broad flat surface pierced with long narrow slits, and these threaded with coarse cotton thread. "My mother used to make tape on just such a one. My first wife, even, wove my suspenders on such a loom." Pasted inside the cupboard door is a ghostly memorial of ten persons who were drowned while on a pleasure excursion June, 1773; each of the ten black coffins at the head of the paper has the initials of one of the unfortunates, and the account below shows that the taste for the horrible is not modern; "two were saved by the people at Marblehead." A cumbrous settle is placed convenient to the fire place, and on its high back, hangs a quantity of homespun wearing-gear and bed clothing, supposed to be airing. Against the wall on the right is a chest of drawers with brass drop handles of very ancient pattern. The chest is two hundred years old, and is for sale.

Between the two "front windows," which are small, very close together, and hung with half curtains of bright colored calico, are an ancient silhouette likeness and the "Song of the Minuet Man," that "was Writ at Boundbruck, March 13th A. D. 1777." Near the window, covering a small stand, is a