Gossip of the Backwoods

BY ALVIN HORTON.

One of the biggest fools in the county was coming toward the cross roads store. With a horn strapped to him, and a pair of well fed hounds following him, the fellow was undeniably a fox-hunter and incidentally a slight thinker.

Now you must not infer that all fox-hunters are lacking in the upper story; for almost everybody up here who can do anything at all is guilty of very frequent participation in this kind of sport, and besides you know we mountaineers consider ourselves tolerably sensible creatures. The fellow was not a fool because he was a fox-hunter weeks before, or would be one week hence, but because he was a fox-hunter then. The thermometer then registered awfully near the point at which one can guarantee that water thrown ten feet upward will be ice long before it has returned to the ground. Moreover most of those who were not then sick with la grippe and pneumonia were too busy then with those who were to think of a trip into the woods which foxes inhabit.

But the fool was not coming to join a party of acquaintances a whit wiser than himself. There were six of us, and we were waiting for the leader. Of course since the change in temperature, we were not very anxious to see him coming, but being youngsters of courage, we dared not ask for a postponement of what our parents called a ludicrously impossible enterprise.

Really, though, some parents used stronger terms than this. I know who they are, but I mustn't tell. Besides you know 'tisn't necessary to tell.

So we seven fools shivered, and with Try, True, Trim, Puller, and some others of the longest eared, fiercest, fox-hating hounds that ever ran in or around Yancey, started for the big mountains. Having besides these helpers a rather burdensome quantity of rations and firearms, we felt equal to any task ever imagined by Cooper or anybody else, and ever conquered by Natty Bumpo or anybody else who ever made tracks in the forest.

In three hours we were well into those quarters, the praises of which had been sung bour leader—who, let me omphasize it by repetition—was one of the biggest fools in the county. Finally we reached the "Balsam Gap." Here beside a tremendous fire, and in hearing of the headwaters of Cane river which contains so many trout, but are watched so closely by the sons of "Big" Tom Wilson, we waited for nightfall, when according to the leader—one of the biggest fools in the county, mind you—it would be wise to start the hounds in search of the elusive Reynard. We shivered, too, while waiting.

'Twas a desolate country over which we looked from the camp—a very desolate country with its dead-looking timber and ominous laurel thickets. Ice clung to the streams, many of which were visible for miles toward the settlements, while cliffs held snow as if they were loath to part from bleak winter.

Desolate indeed! Each look at it lowered the temperature and spirits as well of every one except our leader, whose enthusiasm in the woods nothing could lessen, I am sure.

When the shades had all fallen, the hounds were put promptly into the thickets and, hissed considerably, were lucky enough presently to hit upon a trail. This led around a peak. The music of the pack as they went off was sufficient to confuse any but the most expert listener, and yet the owners contended that they knew at once whether their hounds were favorably situated in the race.

"Hist!" said one. "That's old Try in the lead. Gosh, money wouldn't buy that hound!"

"Pshaw," said somebody else, "that's old Ben—I'd know his voice anywhere. He's allers in the lead, at the start or at the finish."

"God! What a race," ejaculated another, "no difference whose dog's in the lead, he ain't fur ahead, and that fox is chased by as good a set of hounds as ever followed king or duke in other lands."

And he was correct. We followed the ridges, so that not even a note was lost. Round and round, back and forth, they raced, each doing ostensibly all that could be done with voice and legs, and each owner staring through the icy moonlight to catch a glimpse of pursued or pursuers. But we could only hear and be thrilled; for the race at the closest was perhaps a mile away.

For several hours the din was kept up, while we stood on the ridges and shivered. Suddenly it died away, no sound save the roaring of waterfalls in the vast black reached us, as we stamped impatiently as well as uncomfortably among the balsams.

"Some durn something's thro'ed 'em out," observed the leader, the biggest fool, mind you, in the county, "but don't any of you blow a horn. It's allers best to let a hound have his way."

Returning to the fire, we chatted a long while about the merits of hounds and then fell asleep.

I never was able to sleep very soundly in the woods, especially in winter like those around "Balsam Gap." The tense silence, the struggling of myriads about the place where a pillow ought to be, the roar of waters that yet brought to one by the wind, the tread of hungry monsters—these things prevent my getting good rest when they are to be noted.

So it was I who heard about midnight the wailing of a hound away off to the right. Startled, I raised and then heard the whole pack rushing around the mountainside with a vigor which it seemed to me, excited as I was, had increased wonderfully near prospect of instant catch. In a trice the barking all came as it from a standstill.

The others, aroused, were, if possible, more excited than I had been.

"It's bayed, it's bayed," cried the leader. "Boys, I wouldn't take half of Yancey for my hounds."

"We'll just let 'em hold it won't we, till morning?" said I, attempting a ruse in behalf of my tired limbs.

"Not much, young feller," snapped the leader. "Do you think I'd let my hounds run durn nigh eight hours and then git defeated? No, sire, I'll go to ole Try and True if hell ain't between us."

And immediately we all started on a race almost the equal of that just ended. We ran along the ridge until the man in front, the fool, mind you, deemed it proper to go down. Then we ran down, over rocks and logs, and through marshes until he saw fit to go up once more. Then we ran up until really I thought each step the last. Rocks, logs, and marshes were still in the path, or what might have been one, but never was, and so antagonized us that all except the fool in front complained bitterly because of the turn things had taken.

For the fool in front, mind you, was a man whose strength made him a wonder even in Yancey. He was always ahead, very far ahead, it seemed, and writing for his puny but strongly profane followers. The hounds kept barking, and he kept us going until we were with them in what the said fool called the "Green Cove," but what others dubbed "the only good reason for cuss words."

"Here, boys!" cried the leader, "we must smoke 'im out. Git some wood, and we'll have 'im in a jiffy."

Nobody moved, because nobody was able.

"No, by God!" he thundered. "Hold on! It's in a hole and I can see it. The dogs couldn't git in. Hold on!"

Nobody moved, because nobody was able.

"Hold on!" again admonished the excited fellow. "I'll put a bullet between his eyes."

Of course nobody moved, because nobody was able.

With his trusty Marlin, the veteran fox-hunter put the bayed animal beyond the possibility of further worry by Try, True, Trim, Puller, or any of the other long-eared, fierce fox-hating tribe. The rejoicing, however, of the hounds and our leader was unseen, if not absolutely unheard, by the rest of the party; for completely exhausted, we all lay like logs and knew almost nothing.

As you know, I can't sleep very well in the woods, and so in a wonderfully short while I was awake with a throat so dry it nearly burned. Besides I was stiff, and my head ached, and my feet were freezing, and everything was wrong, it seemed propped by an elbow I looked around.

The fox-slayer had built a fire and was feeding the carcass of his fortunate catch to the hungry and tired hounds. The hide hung to a bush, for a fox-hide, you know, is worth seventy-five cents. The darkness was now phenomenal, and I noticed, by following the hunter's occasional glance upward, that the sky was half-covered with threatening clouds.

I heard lots of things in those woods, but nothing just then so plainly as the drip, drip of a tiny stream not more than ten yards away. I endeavored to rise, for my thirst was well-nigh unbearable, but that stiffness made me stop in the old position. Weakly and pitifully, too, of course, I called to the man.

"Sam, I'm dying for water, could you get me a cupful?"

"Sorry, young feller," he replied solemnly, "but right over here's a quagmire, and right over there's another quagmire, and behind us, the Lord knows what. You see we've run in here on a strip not much broader than your body. If we'd missed that we'd have been goners.

"So, youngster, you'll have to wait till daylight—'tain't long, 'bout two hours, I guess."

As Sam spoke kindly, I feel sure he didn't half understand the intensity of my thirst, else he'd have endeavored to get me an icicle or even a thimble full of that water. I fell back considerably the worse for my struggle. There were loud noises just then in those woods, stirred, as they were, by March winds, yet I heard only the beating of the heart within and the drip, drip of the water running by.

Again attempting to rise, again I fell back to hear only the drip, the steady drip, drip of the impossible stream. Like that other prisoner, Prometheus, I suffered the more because of the proximity of pure drink. Like Ben Brace and Will—the 14-year-old boy who ran away to sea and so into Africa—I could feel a hot sun beating upon me as I sucked greedily the fiery blood-sap of a dragon tree, like the black slaves bound in the fast sailing "Pandora" and crying "Agoa! Agoa!"—corrupted Portuguese for "Water! Water!"—I felt myself going rapidly, violently mad, and I lay down to die beside a spring which I could almost, but not quite, reach.

But worse than all feelings, worse than all things heard or seen, was the drip, the steady drip, drip of the little stream so near and yet so utterly unattainable. The noise thereof soon killed imagination, so that I followed suffering before no more I heard nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing, and thought of nothing but that—the drip, drip of the little stream.

Suddenly another, a younger than I, raised his head and called for water. I heard Sam answer kindly that the position wouldn't allow him to hunt for water now, but that daylight was near, and so therefore was freedom from thirst.

But the youngster was not to be quieted; he yelled incessantly and piteously.

"Water! Water!"

And above his loudest cries, above even the roar of the wind I heard the drip, drip, drip.

Still the fox-hunter made no effort ... drip of the tiny rill so near, and yet so far beyond reach.

Perhaps he, too, was going mad because of the drip, the very steady little drip of the water behind him.

"Water!" the youngster's voice was still very soft now, "I'm hot, my throat's burning up, give me only a spoonful of the water I hear."

There was considerable confusion in camp forthwith, and I knew by the excited tones of the others, the whole party, in fact, except for two, that they were going to attempt something for our immediate relief. The leader explained the difficulty of our position and volunteered to go to the little stream, provided the others would follow prepared to rescue him should he sink. Certainly the boys agreed, for a score tightened yet never lived.

Holding a long pole, the veteran started forth to imitate the Good Samaritan. All followed, one with a huge torch, and the others swinging to the rear end of that necessary pole. Their caution seemed lamentable, but their speed was so creditable that I heard besides the dripping water exactly five trembling injunctions from Sam, as many assurances from his followers, and then one stentorian and portentous:

"Hold on, boys!"

The boys held on.

"What's the matter, Sam?" they yelled in a chorus.

"Damn it, 'taint no quagmire 'tall! I'd just forgot where we is at."

Having allayed our thirst and wrapped us in all the available cover, the party strengthened the fire and amid incessant raillery at Sam because so trained a woodsman had been lost, waited for dawn, which somebody said was not more than an hour away. While Sam scowled plainly on the verge of actual anger, the woods rang with boyish and triumphant laughter—and, if you don't mind to hear it again, the very steady drip, drip of that icy stream; but, though the boys had got the start, the finish came in the hunter's favor, just as dawn began to appear to the rear of the big cliff.

"Listen, you pesky fools," he cried; "this is the last time I go into the woods with a pack of fool boys. These yankee spells 'll ruin my hounds, and God knows I wouldn't take half of Yancey for them."

The two of us who had caused so much concern—though really I think our attack but the frenzy of unusual dreams—were awakened by a stir among those already awake and by the baying of the one cur which had accompanied us. We arose to take part in the proceedings.

"It's a coon, boys," cried Sam, "and now we'll have some fun. A coon can whup all the dogs and most of us."

We found the dog in a deep ravine half a mile from camp. The tree beside which he kept vigil was an uncommonly large poplar, and the actions of the dog indicated that the coon had found refuge inside, since the proverbial giant of the forest was but a mere hull.

As Sam always carries an axe into the woods, there was no discussion as to how we might capture the treed animal. In five minutes the tree was ready to fall.

"Now, boys," he urged, "watch them hounds and don't let 'em jump into the holler of this thing, for the coon'll kill 'em shore. A coon can whip anything in the crowd except the cur—he's experienced, you know."

So several of us stood ready to prevent any creature from jumping into the capacious hollow and incidentally into unequal encounter. The hounds were awfully eager to attack this new enemy, but we assured the woodsman that not one would get by us.

When the big poplar had fallen, however, Try, the fiercest hound in the bunch, quickly knocked yours truly aside and hastened in. In a second we heard the combat begin, and in another the brave hound's tail patting in what seemed his death agonies, though no groan was audible.

"God!" cried Sam. "He's killing old Try. Hold on! Give me the axe quick!"

Mounting the log, Sam chopped furiously until he had reached the hollow. But he had miscalculated; only Try's tail was visible.

Again he chopped furiously, some feet below, until he had struck the inside. But again he had miscalculated; this time 'twas the coon's tail the party saw.

"By God, I'll take a hand anyhow," muttered the hunter as he heard Try's body slip.

Opening his huge jacknife and baring his brawny arm, Sam reached inside and brought out the carcass of a large raccoon ripped in twain. Try came, too, for the animals were locked each to the other's jaw, and were holding thereto with a determination rarely seen.

Had there been no interference, the two would have necessarily perished in their gloomy quarters, since the tree was considerably higher at the entrance, and no matter which had been the victor he couldn't have got out. The hound couldn't have backed, nor could his antagonist have pushed his victim up the slick hollow.

The coon was a fine, fat fellow, and his hide, like that of the fox, would have been worth perhaps seventy-five cents had not our leader—the fool, mind you—cut it fairly in two to defend his excessively valuable property.

"The meat's mighty good," he remarked; "but the dogs are the hungriest fellers in the gang, and they can have it."

And Sam, having cut the carcass into properly sized morsels, scattered it for Try, True, Trim, Puller, Ben, and the rest of the long-eared, fox-hating gang.

The day in Sam's opinion was an exceptionally good one for squirrels, and so we hunted squirrels until nightfall. Not very many were killed of course, but, as several shots had been fired, we considered the time not wholly misspent.

At night we essayed to get good rest, and failed. So when morning had come again, we were glad to start for home—that is, all except Sam, who, I am sure, would have stayed in the woods for a month, could he have had his way.

With him in the lead, the journey was another race which sorely tried most of those behind him. We were bound for the settlements, since Sam had assured us that was the better way; but the pace and the obstacles made the route thereto seem so awfully like the pictured way to perdition that lots of us wished we hadn't started anywhere at all.

We went through ravines, over logs which punctured us horribly, and through marshes which tried terribly hard to make and keep us prisoners. No field was to be seen anywhere; so we were really on the road to any civilization.

"Sam! O, Sammy!" yelled some one who wanted a rest; "this feller's going to take another yankee spell. Better stop awhile."

Sam stopped, but with very evident annoyance.

"Give 'im something to eat," he suggested with a frown.

Then we found that all of our rations were left at the camp! We had all the frying pans, all the bedding, and everything in fact except the essentials for the inner man—who, you know, soon swallows up any sort of a traveler.

"Well," observed the hunter; "aint far to the settlement. We can get something there. I know everybody on Martin's creek."

But it was far, very far, to the country in which people lived. When we had found it we were all highly anxious for a bite of anything capable of satiating hunger.

The first house was a three-room log structure, standing in the woods and beside a stream filled with trout; but we found by long and loud hallooing that nobody had ever used it for a residence. The second was likewise a big rude building, and likewise deserted. The third, too, was roughly built, and perhaps lately built, but but assiduous search convinced us that nobody was about, and that nothing had been left from breakfast.

But the fourth—O glorious and life-giving thought!—was surrounded with signs of human and prosperous habitation. We could hear numerous plowboys as they urged their deliberate mules; crowing roosters and cackling hens we could hear, too, and then we could see smoke of fires cooking that dinner so anxiously waited for by the farmer and so essential to this party of hunters.

Sam called and made known our wants. The answer came from the garden, wherein some women were planting onions:

"Mister, ther nex' house 'll feed you. We're too busy." But the next house was filled with sick folks and so couldn't feed travelers.

"Sam, do you know these people?" a tired fellow asked.

"No."

"I knew you didn't, Sam. You're simply lost again."

And therein we all agreed. Nor were we merely suspicious; we were soon convinced. A boy told us that the vicinity was known as "Star Creek," and that Buncombe and the Swannanoa, that wild, much frequented and praised stream, were somewhere to the rear.

Penetrating farther into the community, we found it a mass of hills covered with broom sedge, plowmen and children who were digging up briars, sprouts and such other enemies of the coming crop. We found too lots of folks loaded with excuses for not feeding the tired wayfarers, but finally—O new and life-giving thought!—a family that readily consented to give us food.

'Twas a model home into which we were ushered, we seven fools, and yet there never was, and never will be, a neater place on earth. The three rooms were filled with beds, books and pictures. And everything was just as orderly as a painstaking housekeeper could make it. That home was far back among the primitive settlements, back where woods are open and bleak in winter, so far as human eye can see, and pleasantly cool and closed in summer, except here and there where fields hold up sustenance for another year; back where hard work is the rule and not the exception; but that home was infallible sign of contented hearts that knew every fine impulse known elsewhere, in the open of the advanced country, or in the seclusion of the scholarly city.

Dinner was served by a lass who, we all agreed, was as pretty a lass as ever figured in Scottish ballads, or aught else descriptive of highland characters. She was dignified, yet wholly unaffected; refined, yet not of the too dainty sort that make one tired.

And let me tell you something else: That dinner, consisting, as it did, of milk and butter, turnips and cabbage, eggs and ham, honey and molasses, and various other things, will be remembered by every member of the party so long as he lives. The zest with which we—and Try, True, Trim, Puller, and the other fox hating folk—ate it was shameful, but you know the hungry are ever pitiable, and—will, we were hungry.

Though both the dinner and the young lady, who, it may be remarked parenthetically, chatted with us pleasantly about mountain adventures, made us very loth to depart, yet we knew that we must be making tracks toward our native heath. Since her husband had once logged in Yancey, the mother moreover gave us directions for finding it again, and reluctantly we started on what she said was a trip of a trifle more than fifteen miles.

We climbed to the summit of a mountain, whence could be seen most of the country we had traversed. The ridges and the peaks, beginning in bleakness, stretched away to blue softness in the west.

"Sam," I said, "why do you like the woods so well?"

The hunter turned from his gazing and looked at me fully for a minute. Then he said:

"I love the woods because, when I go into them, I see and hear and feel things that teach me greater lessons than come from any contact with men. The woods multiply the generous things that grow in my heart, because, young man"—and here the woodsman spoke with a warmth that showed conviction and approached eloquence—"the voice of the woods is the voice of God.

"Here's his handiwork, and I know He's mighty and He's good. So I go back home with higher ideals and better, and therefore tender treatment for my hounds, tender caresses for my children, the same old message made a thousand fold tenderer for my wife, and growing reverence for the Father of this glorious universe.

"And constant communication with the spirit of the woods is as necessary to me as the rations I eat. Boys, I'm not a Christian, but so long as I have strength, and there's a woodland left I intend to live very much in the woods; for my moral make-up would shiver to pieces among the vulgar crowds.

"Folks call me a trifler. They even say I'm an idler and a vagrant. They don't know, however, that I'm learning what they're missing:

"That the glory of the woods is in part the glory of Almighty God."

"Forgive me, Sam," I said, "I didn't know it was in you."

Walking hard, we reached home by 10 o'clock, we six fools and Sam, the woodsman and the wise man. We felt tough, and looked tough too no doubt, yet loaded with recollections of trials endured and pleasures acquired, we lay down for a needed rest and long, peaceful reverie.

Italy and George Washa.

Washington Herald.

Italy has made February 22 a legal holiday. Georga Washa vera fine man. He no chopa da tree, he no tella da lie.

Not Safe to Let It Be Long.

New York Sun. . . . .

The Governor of North Carolina had just made his famous femark to the Governor of South Carolina.

"I hdd to do it quick, for fear the Federal government might step in," he explained.

Here with, they set 'em up again.

Where the South Sstands.

NashvilleAmerican.

Southern Democrats who are opposed to Mr. Bryan prefer almost anybody to him, while those who are for his prefer him above all the sons of men. So here stands the South.

'VARSITY SKETCHES

BY Q. S. MILLS.

Professor Collier Cobb is a geologist. He is proud of his work in his profession, and justly, but he is only slightly less interested in his work in the field of literature. Every summer Professor Cobb spends some time on the coast of eastern North Carolina, studying sands, and rocks, and folks. As a result of his visits to Hatteras Island during the past few summers he is soon to publish a volume entitled "Songs and Ballads of Hatteras Island." The songs and ballads of this collection he took from dictation at odd moments while engaged in his geological work on the banks. The collection as a whole has been termed "the most important work of a literary nature that has yet appeared in North Carolina." Of especial interest are several lyric fragments, chief among them "The Mermaid's Song:"

Follow, follow through the sea,
To the Mermaid's melody.
Stately, freely shalt thou range,
Through things dreadful, quaint, and strange,
And through liquid walls behold
Wonders that may not be told,
Treasures too for aye lost,
Gems surpassing human cost.
Fearless, follow, follow me.
Through the treasures of the sea.

This little gem which has been handed down from generation to generation on Hatteras Island, has never before appeared in print. It has the true Elizabethan ring and very probably originated in the club room of the Mermaid Tavern, London, which was frequented by Ben Johnson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Dowie, Carew, and others of their school. Through these Elizabethan fragments Professor Cobb traces the lost colony of Roanoke to Hatteras Island. A magazine article on this collection will soon appear by Professor Cobb.

Even the casual visitor to the Hill cannot fail to be impressed by the important part that the old well that crowns the campus plays in University life. It is the natural center of the college, and toward the benches beneath the great oaks around it the boys are drawn unconsciously to spend their idle hours. With the jest and raillery of those hours passed in the shadow of the oldwell building with its graceful dome and pillars, are joined, too, some of the most pleasant memories of college days. Since this is true of the vacation days of the student it must be even more true of the life of the graduate.

The graduate of a few commencements, past, though, would hardly recognize the old well to-day. It has been desecrated. Insteal of the simple box which once surmounted the well, and which, through its very simplicity merged into the artistic surroundings to form a thoroughly harmonious picture, instead of this simple but ornamental covering the aluminus now finds a distinctly modern and plebeian pump. Nor has this pump any of the moss or scars of years to relieve it of the vulgarity of its newness. It is out of place in its surroundings—as out of place as a freshman would be in a cap and gown, and those of the old regime of college life who still linger on the Hill are forced to feel it.

Especially are they outraged by "An Appeal for the Old Pump" that was uttered recently by a member of the class of 1910, while the pump was being laid by for repairs. The rough pine box temporarily taking its place injured the freshman's feelings, and The Tar Hel was thoughtless enough to publish his lament. The plea was all right in itself, but those of the old order of college days cannot help sympathizing with the University student who has not in his mind, at least, the picture of the college well as it used to be, its very outlines so suggestive of the coolness of the limpid waters of the fountain beneath that the passer-by was fain to stop for a drink from the dripping bucket whether he were thursty or no.

And never, since the advent of the pump, have the waters of the old well been as sweet to the tongue or as sparkling to the eye as when, in the past, they flowed from the lip of the brimming bucket to quench the thirst of senior or freshman. The student who cannot look back with longing to the days when he tilted the cool bucket to his lips and drowned thirst and weariness of brain alike in a draught of the sweetest water that ever flowed has, indeed, never known the University. What matter if he were sometimes aroused from his blissful contemplation of the depths of the old well-bucket by the escape of a part of its contents down his shirt collar or by the tattoo against its surface of acorns aimed at his head—he had tasted a draught of a liquor priceless to kings and princes, henceforth never to be tasted again by man.

So those of the old regime of college life cannot see the unsightly pump that has taken the place of the once graceful cover of the well, or near its praises, without experiencing a feeling of regret for that which is gone by. Perhaps it is their fault, perhaps they are entering the dotage of their regret is none the less sincere for the old well of the past, which has already become only a memory.

The Hard-Luck Professor was leaning on the desk taking in the advantages of Registrar Woolen's new typewriter.

"How about it, are you going to invest in one?" queried the owner after he had finished showing off the different shift appliances to his satisfaction.

"Invest in one? I say invest in one!" returned the Hard-Luck Professor. "Why, I haven't hardly got through paying for an Underwood that I thought was just the thing I wanted." He shook his head gloomily.

"No," he continued, "I never bought a hat that didn't go out of style, or a suit that didn't bag at the knees, and now I haven't got the latest typewriter before I find one that beats it all hollow."

"Pretty hard luck," sympathized his friend.

"Hard luck? I say hard luck!" replied the pessimistic one. "Why, I've lost my suitcase and my bird-dog and my Gimghoul pin and both my dress suits—all since Christmas."

"Not to mention your religion," put in the registrar.

"But I'm not all gone yet," concluded the Hard-Luck Professor. "I've got a thirty-cent umbrella up at the house, and a pair of over-shoes at the laboratory, and an old straw hat down at the store, so I'll be all right when summer comes again."

And he cast a final doleful glance at the machine and departed, as the college bell summoned him to deliver a lecture on pharmacy.

OLD AGE POSTPONED?

Electricity Used to Prevent Hardening of the Arteries.

In addition to the redoubtable microbes, those vigilant foes ever on the alert to take advantage of any openin gthrough which they may effect an entry and achieve their deadly work on our bodies, each one of us has to dread a still more prolific source of danger to life—namely, the gradual and progressive hardening of our arteries. It is to this cause that the deaths of the immense majority of living beings are due. The malady does not always wait for old age before exercising its ravages. How many young men and women are there, apparently in flourishing health, who are suddenly fatally stricken down by maladies of mysterious origin, which, in reality, are nothing but visible manifestations of the arterial hardening that has been going on unknown to the victim! Youth, however, may escape these catastrophes; old age hardly ever does. If we reconstitute the physiological history of any invalid, of any one who is aged, of any one whose death we have to mourn, we shall discover the same characteristic in every case. The pulse had too strong a beat, the blood circulated through channels that were too narrow or too hard. This excess of pressure is the infallible symptom of the imminent arterial hardening.

We shall understand the exact position of aaffirs by imagining an india rubber tube through which ordinary lightning gas is passing. Should the tube be slightly damaged or in any way blocked, an excessible pressure of the gas will tend to produce fissures in the tube. Reduce the pressure and the danger is obviated. So it is with our arteries; they are always in danger of the blood circulating in them at too great a pressure.