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## THE FLITTING.

The blackbirds came from the hills today  
Shouting farewells from the dawn 'till dark,  
And all through their twittering, far away,  
Struck in the call of the meadow lark;  
Tomorrow, under the cottonwoods gray  
Empty nests will be hanging stark.

Tomorrow the cobweb of wires and wires  
Will tangle the sunset high in the west,  
And the sky will be fenced with tall church spire  
That reach up out of the smoke for rest,  
And in every flash of the strange hearth-fires  
I will see the swing of an empty nest.

## A Sketch.

This makes me yawn; and by the time I finish a pipe-full of Old Perique (I never smoke anything else), I will be in fine shape to roll in and slumber righteously. This is the first time I have read the critic's notes on current literature for—let me see how long. How it does all come back. Little straws tickle.

Most critics of today write as though they thought their duty lay in calling a man down if his freshness of style made an interesting story out of what would be a drowsy narrative, told as it occurred, untrimmed.

That spring in the Fifties, when we left Washington and Lee, at least one third of us had the usual souful yearnings to love and be loved. Of course, we wrote rank verse; but of course, too, we were simply being initiated into the joyful mysteries of puppy love. When a matured man loves, he never mocks the divine passion with wordy fripperies; but what more could you expect from a lot of world-wise infants, fresh from the arms of a loving Alma Mater? But the serious part about our rubbish was that some of it was read—actually read.

Well, that is neither here nor there,

except that it goes to show what may be accomplished by using a very fresh style; so I am inclined to believe that even our modern author's style captures his readers more than does what he tells them.

Why, if I could pad and polish all I've seen and heard, I could use cold records of hard knocks in a beef-steak world, use them to make a standard modern impressionist. If I could paint life pictures with my gummy old gold pen, so as to blot over and hide the lines of horror, I would never tackle another engineering job, — never make another winter camp.

Strange, but I used to think I could acquire an adorning style of writing. I hoped some day to leave something readable for infants yet to come; but I guess all that comes under the head of boyish fancies; for I remember that the theory is that what is in a man will come out if he gives it a chance; and surely I have done nothing to stultify myself.

I have worked hard and faithfully to win my little mess of pottage; and little has occurred to me since I left the old college campus that I cannot recall in perfect order. I believe I have not been a poor observer but simply a truthful one.

Today I can give you detailed accounts of most anything you wish in the line of comedy or tragedy; and my friends say I, sometimes, can tell and take a joke. I can tell you of great battle-scenes, of mangled, bleeding men; for as a young engineer on Uncle Robert's Field Corps, I saw more hellish scenes than any man can comprehend. Today I could conjure up enough faces, pallid in death agony, to drive me wild; but God be thanked, I am given the power of remem-