COLONIAL NEIGHBORS.

By Georgiana M. Clapham.

A MOST interesting phase of our common country history is that which traces the migrations of families,—whence they came, whither they went, and wherfore. The annals of Long Island and Connecticut in colonial days are connected in a most neighborly fashion and are full of romantic incident. Many a lover used the Sound as his only pathway to the sweetheart living across the water, and by this route the Quaker maidens were thus transplanted to Puritan by the sturdy New-Englanders. Using the same pathway, the men who discovered the sweetness and thrifty ways of the maid who said her “thee” and “thou” with such grace saw how much more fertile and yielding the land there than the rocky hills which only his faith and unflagging, stubborn industry could have made productive; and seeing this, he often transferred his belongings as well as his affections. To-day his descendants often own the land where he settled when love made him captive. But the men of literary tastes and pursuits, college-bred men, who had fitted for a profession, these often migrated from Long Island to New England, and thence sometimes to Southern and Western cities.

A family identified with both sides of the Sound, and notable for its long line of honored and illustrious names, is the Woolsey family. At the extreme north of Glen Cove, Long Island, its water frontage facing the Connecticut shore, is a large tract of land still called “Dosoris,” as named by the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey when he received it with his wife, Abigail Taylor, as her portion; Dosoris, from “Dos moris,” meaning “wife’s dower.” This name, given as long ago as 1736, has never been changed nor merged into Glen Cove, of which village it now forms a part.

In 1707, Benjamin Woolsey graduated from Yale; and in 1846 his great-grandson, Theodore Dwight Woolsey, was made president of the college to which the Rev. Benjamin owed much of the scholarly elegance for which he was so noted. The value of a college course he impressed on all young men brought under his influence. The Southold records show the effect of this influence in raising the standard of the young men, and leading them to the best training.

It is interesting and curious that his descendants are everywhere except on Long Island, though there is nowhere in the country a more charming spot than Dosoris. The old manor house, rejuvenated by modern changes, may well be the roostree for several generations yet. East and west of the house are buried, in small enclosures reserved for the purpose, members of the Rev. Benjamin’s family and those of later Woolsey generations; but in Connecticut are by far the larger number, both of the living and the dead. Did the blue shores across the Sound exert some magnetic influence combining with the affection loyal students always feel for the college which has been the starting point of their
intellectual life, and whose stimulus was Connecticut?

For many years this locality kept its ancient beauty of dignified seclusion, but such rapid strides have been made in the past six years in the way of modern "improvements," that its quaint old-

\[\text{The Modernized Manor House.}\]

\[\text{The Fireplace in the Dining-Room.}\]

time charm is fast disappearing. Yet there lingers still a rare harmony of past and present, place and people.

The old house stands to the east of a picturesque section, which has so rapidly changed its character that a few years hence the new people will have a new place, with no memory or likeness of the old. Dosoris Lane, formerly one long avenue, was like a bower, its trees arching overhead, making on hottest days a delightful cool twilight. It is quite another affair today. Smart little modern cottages meet you at its entrance; farther on, saloons, and, as one progresses, a primitive-looking meeting-house demurely waits by way of contrast within its shelter of trees. Passing a woody stretch, the lane opens to a break of meadow land on either side, with a distant background of trees whose proportions suggest a century's growth. Near the end of the lane are the modern changes: open lawns with wide water views; to the right, on a gently rising knoll, stands the old Cobes mansion, purchased a few years ago by Brooklyn's lamented philanthropist, Charles Pratt, a man of New England birth and training. Opposite its entrance are the velvety lawns of the places owned by his sons; and stretching west to the water is the magnificent park, the last gift of Mr. Pratt to Glen Cove.

The lane ends at the cross roads, and
Colonial Neighbors.

That Rev. Benjamin Woolsey was a man before his times, there is evidence in all the old records; and his tombstone eulogy, despite the century's storms, is a clear testimony. He was spoken of at the time as "a dissenting Protestant Congregationalist." This was because he was willing to preach in any edifice devoted to the worship of God, and was friendly to all religions. It is further
stated that when he held services at his Dosoris home, he not only gave fine sermons, but to those who came from a distance a bountiful dinner. Would it be easy to-day to find in a country parish a man of such recognized talents and unusual wealth, not only riding a distance of thirty miles each Sunday, during a pastorate of twenty years, but adding to this a gratuitous service at his home, providing for the physical as well as spiritual needs of the comers? While he was pastor for the Hempstead parish his son Melancthon Taylor Woolsey died, “engaged as a colonel in the service of his country, fighting against the French in Canada.” The news must have been received late in the week, too late to enable the father to supply the pulpit in his absence; and the record states that “he left his family in their affliction and performed his usual ministerial duties.” He had but two sons, Melancthon being the youngest.

Abigail Taylor Woolsey and Lady Cornbury, wife of Lord Cornbury, governor of New York and New Jersey, agreed to name their first daughters respectively after each other. Through this pretty bit of sentiment came first the name of Theodosia and Theodore in the Woolsey family.

While State and county records give a condensed history, after their sort, of the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey, there are few of the personal details one always likes to know; and there exists no silhouette or likeness of any sort, unless the sculptured image on his tombstone was intended for one. Of his wife Abigail there is a fine portrait in the possession of one of her great-great-grandsons, and it is worthy of study as showing a type of womanhood that our generation may honor. The repose, quiet dignity, and gracious womanliness are in contrast to what is seen in many cases of the typical faces of to-day. Much was accomplished by the women of those struggling times, and without any of the labor-saving devices of our day; yet as a rule the faces tell no story of restlessness, hurry, worry, or the nervous eagerness too apparent in many of the women of this electrical age.

Lacking in details as is the history which we have of the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey, there is still much of interest; for, living as he did in an age of prejudice and bigotry, his life and teachings were such as to make him a conspicuous figure, as he would be even to-day, when the widest latitude is given to religious thought and
action. It is related that in his first short and troubled parish ministration, after his graduation at Yale, he preached in an Episcopal church at Jamaica, Long Island. He was then called “an independent student and approbationer.” At this time, in Jamaica, there was a feeling of antagonism between the Episcopal church, the Quakers, and the Presbyterians. The church where Woolsey preached was presided over by Thomas Payer, sent from England. Sects were many, and buildings devoted to religious worship were few, and there were frequent dissensions among religious bodies. The governor refused to take cognizance of them, when urged, and for this was denounced by some of the malcontents and “accused of wrong doing.”

This freedom at Jamaica was the first evidence of the liberality which afterwards characterized the thoughts and actions of the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey. Not finding his first parish work to his liking, he settled in Southold, where his labors were among a people who were too poor to support a minister, yet where he found a wide and satisfactory field. He needed all the virtues he possessed, for previous to his pastorate there had been little to encourage a minister; yet in this small, ill-paid field he labored for sixteen years, and the good influence of his fine mind and untrammeled thought the local history duly acknowledged.

After establishing his home at Dosoris, he again became active in parish work. His parish was in the village of Hempstead, where for twenty years he went and came, most likely on horseback; if his wife accompanied him, as she doubtless did, it must have been in the quaint old pillion. Horses in those days must have had “staying” qualities; the work exacted of them demanded not only strength and endurance, but speed.

The tombstone eulogy of this old-time parson, and the obituary notice in “Hugh Gaines Mercury” acquaint us with a man who, in times of great narrowness, “was equable, above and beyond all nar-
pathos that animated his discussions added peculiar grace and dignity to his address; while it engaged the attention, his hearers discovered the sincere piety and fervent devotion that warmed and governed his own heart. He loved good men of every profession, and owned and admired sincere piety under whatever form or denomination it appeared. Justice, charity, consideration, hospitality, and public spirit were virtues to which he paid most sincere regard. In discharge of the many duties which constitute the tender and affectionate husband, the indulgent, kind parent, the mild, gentle master, the obliging neighbor, the sincere, faithful friend, he had few equals and no superior."

Surely a good record! His will indicated the character of the times in which he lived, for he leaves his wife “five negroes to be sold and the money placed at interest.” She is also to have the use of “ye wainscot room and ye bedroom adjoinging.”

In the rebuilding, these two rooms did not lose their character of ornamentation nor the colonial white paint. When the chimney was repaired by the late owner, an old brick was found with the date “1734,” and the initials “M. W.” cut in bold lines,—probably to commemorate the rebuilding by Melanchthon Taylor Woolsey. This son must have had the house and a land portion given him, as there is recorded a deed of conveyance from Benjamin Woolsey and his wife Abigal,—a portion having been reserved for the occupancy of his parents during their lifetime. In whatever changes have been made in the old manor house, the original timbers and old chimneys were retained, and many rooms, such as the “wainscot room,” were restored intact. Its later owners have retained in its large, hospitable rooms the atmosphere of the past, the well-preserved old furniture doing its part. Over the fireplace of the “wainscot room” hangs a fine portrait of Washington, the work of Rembrandt Peale, and his first copy of his original painting, for which Washington gave sittings. The heavy, severe look, so common to most of the portraits of Washington, is absent from this; the coloring is soft and warm; and the portrait is devoid of all harshness in line or expression; there is a gentle dignity and a suggestion of that common human nature which makes one lovable as well as admirable. So highly is this painting prized by the family that no persuasive eloquence has ever won it for a “loan exhibition.”

Opposite the entrance door of this room is the door where the impromptu execution of Gen. Nathaniel Coles by hanging in the doorway was so clum-
sily managed by the Connecticut raiders that he was rescued before it was too late; although it is recorded that "he being a man of unusual stature could easily have effected his own release."

Adjoining this east room is the dining-room with its quaint, handsome, cavernous fireplace. Down its great space, on summer nights, the moonbeams stream over the andirons out upon the floor.

From the windows here can be seen the long sand beaches, the near marshes with the winding estuaries of the Sound, giving shelter to water fowl, and making a very paradise for gunners. A long continuous view of the Sound is like a panorama, constantly changing, even in the coloring of its background, the Connecticut shore.

Curious neighbors are the old house and its front-door decorations. On either side of the door are the bases of two columns, once in the palace of the Caesars. They were brought from Egypt when the New York obelisk was transported under Capt. Garringe's command, — MR. PRICE having been on the expedition. One age thus vies with another here in claims for honor.

The house has never since its occupancy by the Rev. Benjamin lost its intellectual individuality. Interest in many literary and scientific movements still goes out from the neighborhood of the quiet grave of the man who appreciated the worth of mind over matter, and whose life exemplified such rare moral qualities. Volumes bear witness how worthy of him are his descendants.

Overlooking this historic place are old trees of superb proportions, towering over those of later growth with an imperial dignity and stateliness. Near the house is a large cottonwood, said to be the only one on Long Island. It lifts its great top from an immense length of trunk, commanding instant attention and admiration.

The ascending west path, leading to a lovely outlook over the water, is noticeable for two colossal bunches of box, the coat-of-arms of our past. To the east winds the farm road past the locust grove where the wonderfully preserved tombstone has for over a century borne its record of the man who once trod the soil now holding his ashes. What a record of the generations and the families whose lives have had their starting point on this old inheritance, "The Wife's Dower"! Here the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey left the impress of his vigorous nature on his immediate descendants, and from here came that line which has become more famous in the succeeding years in the State whose line could be seen from the old manor house. In the later years the father of its present owners, Mr. George James Price, brought to it the atmosphere of literature and intellectual life, entertaining such men as Bishop Horatio Potter, George William Curtis, Emerson, Bryant, Horace Greeley, Henry J. Raymond, and others of equal worth; and to this historic house his son brings the vestiges of a past whose date is before Christ. It brings one under a strange spell to start from the old house between gateways of Egypt toward the ancient trees which shade the grounds.

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