



Death Valley in '49

William Lewis Manly

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St. Albans, Vermont is near the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, and only a short distance south of "Five-and-forty north degrees" which separates the United States from Canada, and some sixty or seventy miles from the great St. Lawrence River and the city of Montreal. Near here it was, on April 6th, 1820, I was born, so the record says, and from this point with wondering eyes of childhood I looked across the waters of the narrow lake to the slopes of the Adirondack mountains in New York, green as the hills of my own Green Mountain State. The parents of my father were English people and lived near Hartford, Connecticut, where he was born. While still a little boy he came with his parents to Vermont. My mother's maiden name was Phoebe Calkins, born near St. Albans of Welch parents, and, being left an orphan while yet in very tender years, she was given away to be reared by people who provided food and clothes, but permitted her to grow up to womanhood without knowing how to read or write. After her marriage she learned to do both, and acquired the rudiments of an education. Grandfather and his boys, four in all, fairly carved a farm out of the big forest that covered the cold rocky hills. Giant work it was for them in such heavy timber—pine, hemlock, maple, beech and birch—the clearing of a single acre being a man's work for a year. The place where the maples were thickest was reserved for a sugar grove, and from it was made all of the sweet material they needed, and some besides. Economy of the very strictest kind had to be used in every direction. Main strength and muscle were the only things dispensed in plenty. The crops raised consisted of a small flint corn, rye oats, potatoes and turnips. Three cows, ten or twelve sheep, a few pigs and a yoke of strong oxen comprised the live stock—horses, they had none for many years. A great ox-cart was the only wheeled vehicle on the place, and this, in winter, gave place to a heavy sled, the runners cut from a tree having a natural crook and roughly, but strongly, made. In summer there were plenty of strawberries, raspberries, whortleberries and blackberries growing wild, but all the cultivated fruit was apples. As these ripened many were peeled by hand, cut in quarters, strung on long strings of twine and dried before the kitchen fire for winter use. They had a way of burying up some of the best keepers in the ground, and opening the apple hole was quite an event of early spring.

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