

WILLIMANTIC AND VICINITY.

We have a number of subscribers, former residents of this town and village, now scattered abroad, who, when remitting their subscriptions, not unfrequently have a word to say respecting their interest in the JOURNAL, and the gratification they experience in reading the news from their old home. As specimens we present the following extracts from two letters recently received from gentlemen who formerly resided here. One, a prominent teacher, now occupying an honorable and responsible position, says:

"Put in everything that you hear or see in and around Willimantic. Nothing is so trivial that it does not interest the absent. * * * You have made an interesting and instructive paper; your selections are good; your genealogies must interest many; even the advertisements tell me who are the live merchants in your village."

The other, a merchant in a western city, writes:

"There is no bill that I pay more cheerfully than that for my Willimantic paper, more particularly at this time, as I never enjoyed it more than I do now. * * I attribute its increased interest, in a great measure, to the fact that you pay more attention to local news than either of your predecessors have done, and that is just what we Willimantickers at a distance take it for."

To gratify this class of our subscribers we propose giving a few brief sketches of Willimantic, its present appearance and surroundings, with such facts and thoughts as may occur to us while visiting the different localities in and about the village. We cannot expect they will possess much interest, or any novelty to our home readers, and they may, if they please, pass over them without reading.

A word of personal explanation may not be inappropriate here. Some of our distant readers may not be aware that for nearly eight years we have been so much of an invalid as to be confined mostly to the house, only being able to ride about the village a little in the summer time. We have in consequence become, in some measure, a stranger in Willimantic, where we have passed most of our days, and every road of ground, every hill and valley, rock and tree and stream have been as familiar to us from early childhood as our own home. With this explanation we proceed to give an account of our first trip about the village.

From our home we pass down Jackson street (named for Lyman Jackson, the worthy colored man who lived in the "house in the lot," where the writer spent the early years of his life) to Union formerly called "Back" street, and across it to Main street, in front of the old Jillson mill, with its north end and bellry almost in the road. Here we stop to look about a little, and the first thing that attracts our attention is the ruins the late fire on the premises of the Linen Company. The bleach and boiler house that stood here, which were consumed, occupied the site of the old yellow machine shop, where Jillson & Capen once carried on the manufacture of cotton machinery, and the blacksmith shop which stood near the

low machine shop, where Jillson & Capen once carried on the manufacture of cotton machinery, and the blacksmith shop which stood near the old dam. This is an interesting locality; for here, on this identical spot, was established a foundry and "Iron Works," about 1725. The original Jillson mill which, had it not been for our water works, force pumps and hose connected with the different mills, would probably have gone with the boiler house the other night looks as "natural as life"; and being now a part of the Linen establishment, is used principally for the manufacture and storage of spools for the thread manufactured by this company. These spools are made from the white Birch, heretofore used mainly for pea-brush and bean-poles. The company use large quantities and pay from five to six dollars a cord for it. The spools are made by machinery especially adapted to the purpose, and are turned out with great rapidity. But we are traveling out of our present limits.

In passing we notice on the opposite side of the road that the Universalist meeting-house (lately Spiritualist) has undergone a metamorphosis, and is a meeting-house no longer. Mr. Geo. W. Burnham, the proprietor, altered the upper portion of it into tenements and fitted up the basement as a grocery store which is a very nice and convenient one. After passing the Duck mill we come to the new Thread mill and have a strong desire to go in and take a look, and see if we can discover the mysterious processes by which cotton is made as strong as linen and beautiful as silk. But even if we could render null and void the "No Admittance," which guards every entrance, and could obtain a pass from our friend Hall to make a tour of inspection through the mill, we should be obliged to forego the pleasure of a visit; for such a "getting up stairs" and so much walking as would be necessary to go the rounds would be more than we should venture to undertake.

This fine, large mill, built in such a substantial and tasteful manner, stands just above where the old "Iron Works" bridge stood on the river side of the road leading west. It covers the site of the school-house that stood here, which was the first one built on this side of the river. We will not at present attempt to describe the appearance of this mill, as we intend by and by to include a particular account of it in our "Historical Notes on Willimantic." Its site is so low that it does not show to good advantage.

Just below is the arch stone bridge (in place of the old wooden one) thrown across the Willimantic river, a fine, substantial structure, as enduring as time. At this end of the old bridge, on the east side of the road, as some of our readers will remember, formerly stood the "Light House," a small two-story grogshop, which, in the early days of Willimantic dispensed liquor enough to the inhabitants to float it well on its way to Norwich, where most of the "ardent" came from in those days. But that is gone, and near by stands a waste house, belonging to the Linen Company.

We next come to the "Old Stone," which every teacher and pupil will remember who ever

entered within its walls. We have a most feeble recollection of the time spent here: as a teacher, for of all the miserable, ill-contrived schoolhouses ever built, this was, before it was remodeled, the cap-sheaf. The Linen Company own the land all around it, and we understand they desire to buy the house and land where it stands. We hope this is so, and that we shall have ere long a new schoolhouse of the right sort and in an eligible location.

Near the schoolhouse is the old "shackle dam," which leads over to the "Oven Hole," where in our boyhood days, about this time of year we used often to go and see shad and salmon caught. Below the dam is the sawmill pond and near it across the road just as you enter the "State," stands, silent and solitary, the venerable shop where Alfred Howes once presided and swung the blacksmith's hammer. One of the old buttonwoods is left standing near, looking the worse for wear, and somewhat mournfully reminding us of the past. Just below and across the way is the sawmill, looking very much as it did thirty or forty years ago, and there we saw "Uncle Orrin" in attendance, where, if we mistake not, we used to see him when a schoolboy, looking just the same, apparently just as old and no older than he did then giving us the impression that there is one individual among us not subject to the laws of fashion and change.

The old "State" has changed. For many years it was the same quiet, sleepy village, but it is so no longer; and we will say to our distant readers that greater changes are impending here, which will prevent its being recognized and those who wish to see it as it is, with some of its ancient characteristics, must visit it soon. The old mill, the Howes house opposite, the woolen factory, the carding factory, and the old fulling mills, &c., are all gone. The ancient paper mill is altered into a grist mill, and there is very little that will remind one of the "State" as it was forty years ago. All that is venerable is soon to disappear, and in its place a new and splendid factory is to be erected, a modern village built, and the place which once knew it will know it no more forever.

We omit further notice of the proposed mill and improvements by the Linen Company, as we intend to speak more particularly of them in another place.

We pass along down to Wellsville, the place where modern Willimantic began: and a sorry beginning it was. But of this in our "Notes." This is a very quiet and pleasant part of the village. The fields are green, the trees are putting forth, the factory and buildings look neat, and everything about has a pleasing rural look. The old Baker house, now owned, by Scott Smith, is the only building that reminds us of former times. Capt. Capen's residence and buildings look neat and in good repair, and the lands about appear to be under excellent cultivation. In fact all the lots about here, including those down on the "Point," and towards the Horseshoe, which are mostly in grass, present a fine, fresh appearance.

We pass up the Mansfield road by Mr. Rol-