

**AN ECHO
OF PASSION**

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An echo of passion by George Parsons Lathrop

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GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP



Author's Edition

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET

1884

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

MR. DAVID DOUGLAS having thought it worth while to reprint in England this little book of mine, I avail myself of the opportunity to prefix to it these few words, in which I wish to say only that he has kindly remunerated me for that which, under a system of international obliquity ignoring the modest claims of one class of workers, could demand no recompense. I hope that Mr. Douglas's fair dealing will be respected, and that in time it may be emulated in the policy both of England and the United States towards alien authors.

G. P. LATHROP.

NEW YORK, *July* 1884.

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AN ECHO OF PASSION.



I.

IN the midst of the stilly afternoon, Benjamin Fenn, lying on the grassy side of a hill at Tanford, looking over a low stone wall through the gap between a clump of light-leaved ash-trees and an oak which had gathered in its arms the shade of two centuries, gazed at a distant, mist-like sheet of water resting in the wooded hollow far below. Its mild, humid sparkle was like a memory hidden away from the contact of everyday life,—a place in the past, where once he might have bathed his heart in a pleasant coolness, but which the dense growth of years had since concealed.

“It is strange,” he said to his wife, “how that little Swallow Pond makes me think of the past, and yet I never saw it before.”

In fact they had but just come to Tanford, to spend the first vacation which the young chemist, employed by a large manufacturing house, had allowed himself since his marriage, five years before.

"I know what you mean," said she, looking up from her novel. She was nestled prettily on a travelling rug nearer the wall, with one of the lowest oak boughs darting out above and stretching its sharp-outlined leaves like a little roof above her pale golden head,—a sort of votive image, placed there for her husband to worship. "I have those sensations myself, sometimes, and I don't know what to make of them. How do you explain it, Ben? Isn't there something chemical, or physi— physiological about it, or something of that kind?"

A little bird in the neighbouring birch-wood gave a loud, bright, astonished whistle at this question, and Mrs. Ethel's husband laughed under his mild reddish beard.

"There's more or less chemistry in everything," he answered, "and there's a little of nearly everything in chemistry. But I'm afraid it doesn't account for this."

In his secret mind his mood was by no means a laughing one. Had his wife, he

asked himself, ever really experienced the sensation he had just felt? Hardly possible. Had she the least idea what he was thinking about? Equally impossible. Finally, would he be willing to tell her? To this question he conveniently deferred making any answer. He relapsed, instead, into the delicious dreaming quietude of a few minutes before,—gazing off again at the glimmer of Swallow Pond, with the rough blue mountains beyond; at the clouds which were lazily pulling themselves to pieces in the clear, airy blue above; at the sweet, fresh quiet of the solitary region that surrounded him. Now and then the definite but muffled sound of a woodman's axe sent its regular "chock!—chock!" from some remote angle of the upland, ceasing again when the wielder rested his arm; and several times the rude tinkle of a cow-bell resounded along the shaven curve of the hill, from a pasture nearer the village. One of the cattle lowed.

"Do you notice, Ethel," Fenn suddenly asked, "that a slight echo—or perhaps it is a resonance—of that cow's lowing reaches us with the sound, and almost before the direct sound-waves?"

She did not respond at once; and when

she did so it was with a slightly injured tone. "No, I haven't," she said.

"I'm not trying to humbug you," her husband assured her. "It's a very curious fact, which I never happened to observe before. In fact, I wouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't just heard it."

"I suppose you mean *I* ought to have observed it," said the little saint under the oak-tree, not very sweetly.

"Not at all," said Fenn, quickly. "I thought it would interest you."

"Well, then," proceeded Ethel, with a light, saucy laugh, "tell the cow to tinkle or make some kind of noise again, and I'll listen."

"Please be serious," he begged, assuming a methodical expression. "This is a thing I can partly explain, if I couldn't the other. We must be very near the spot where the rebound which makes the echo takes place; so we hear some reflected wave of sound just before the original pulse can travel away around the curve of the hill. Am I clear? It's very singular, though very queer," he resumed, in surprise at his discovery. "There! Didn't you hear it, just then?"

The cow had lowed a second time.