

BITS OF GOSSIP

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Bits of Gossip by Rebecca Harding Davis

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REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

BITS OF GOSSIP

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By

Rebecca Harding Davis

Author of "Silhouettes of American Life"

"Doctor Warrick's Daughters"



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BITS OF GOSSIP

I

IN THE OLD HOUSE

THE world that we lived in when I was a child would seem silent and empty to this generation. There were no railways in it, no automobiles or trolleys, no telegraphs, no sky-scraping houses. Not a single man in the country was the possessor of huge accumulations of money such as are so common now. There was not, from sea to sea, a trust or a labor union. Even the names of those things had not yet been invented.

The village in Virginia which was our home consisted of two sleepy streets lined with Lombardy poplars, creeping between a slow-moving river and silent, brooding hills. Important news from the world outside was brought to us when necessary by a man on a galloping horse.

But such haste seldom was thought necessary. Nobody was in a hurry to hear the

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news. Nobody was in a hurry to do anything, least of all to work or to make money. It mattered little then whether you had money or not. If you were born into a good family, and were "converted," you were considered safe for this world and the next.

Incomes were all small alike. Indeed, among gentlefolk it was considered vulgar to talk of money at all — either to boast that you had it, or to complain of your lack of it. This was a peculiar trait of the times, and, I suspect, grew out of one dogma of the religious training which then was universal. Every child was taught from his cradle that money was Mammon, the chief agent of the flesh and the devil. As he grew up it was his duty as a Christian and a gentleman to appear to despise filthy lucre, whatever his secret opinion of it might be.

Besides, the country was so new, so raw, that there were few uses for wealth. You must remember that in the early thirties Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were in the same condition as to population, wealth, and habits of life as the fourth-rate country