

**THE DOOLITTLE
FAMILY IN AMERICA.
PART II, PP. 121 - 223**

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The Doolittle family in America. Part II, pp. 121 - 223 by William Frederick Doolittle

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WILLIAM FREDERICK DOOLITTLE

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CENTER ST., WALLINGFORD, CT.

THE
DOOLITTLE FAMILY
IN AMERICA

(PART II.)

COMPILED BY
WILLIAM FREDERICK DOOLITTLE, M. D.

May their characters be read, their worth appreciated,
and memories richly cherished by their children's children
forever!—DAVID LEE, Esq.

1902
PRESS OF A. J. WATT
CLEVELAND

Time is hastening on and we
What our fathers are shall be,—
Shadow-shapes of memory!
Joined to that vast multitude
Where the great are but the good,
And the mind of strength shall prove
Weaker than the heart of love.

—Whittier.

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THE DOOLITTLE FAMILY

PART II.

GLIMPSSES OF THEIR COLONIAL LIFE.

No human being grows up who does not so intertwin in his growth the whole idea and spirit of his day, that rightly to dissect out his history would require one to cut to pieces and analyze society, law, religion, the metaphysics and the morals of his times.—*Harriet Beecher Stowe.*

In order to catch the *hidden thought* of those olden days we should turn back on the path of the years and come within the enchanting influence of the early settlements nestling among the Connecticut hills. We must make the acquaintance of the good neighbors, old and young, of high and low degree, gathered about the great log fire blazing on the hearth of a winter's evening, and listen to the animated discussion of primitive politics, of the latest sermon, and hear the kindly gossip of the town as well as local legends, thrilling ghost stories, with weird accounts of haunted houses in the neighborhood. We should look in on merrymakings and other county frolics, and be present at weddings, at funerals and the solemn services in the rude old meeting house on the quiet Sabbath. The plain homespun and quaint manners and customs of the village folk are not to be overlooked, and at election and general training we must enter into the full enjoyment of these gala days.

Or, suppose as passengers on the *ancient stage coach* in that far away time, we are returning to spend Thanksgiving, the queen of New England festivals, with a grandsire and granny at the old

homestead. It is a few years before the Revolution; and on this last day of the journey, the party is aroused before dawn from slumbers at the tavern to catch the early coach. How romantic such a frosty star-lit morning of the late Indian summer,—the hurried breakfast of smoking corn cake, savory bacon, the potato roasting hot from the bed of ashes, and steaming, creamy, fragrant coffee—the chill crisp morning—lanterns gliding ghost-like in and out the large stables—drowsy horse boys just from their snug beds shivering about the door yard—the resonant crack of the whip,— the clear, sharp clatter of hoofs on the frozen ground—the rattle of wheels—the scramble in the dark for seats—the long, tedious ride with fellow travelers torpid and glum, partly hidden by the gray of the dawn and partly in mufflers—at length the side lights fading out with daybreak stealing over the coach load—the gradual warmth of conversation and good nature once more prevailing over sharp elbows and cold, numb feet shuffling among the scanty straw.

Life is stirring at farmhouses along the way. Smoke is beginning to curl from the stone chimneys into the frosty air, and industrious farmers are caring for their stock in barns bulging with the season's harvest. Often through open doors peer out tiers of golden pumpkins, great pyramids of rosy apples, or huge sloping heaps of yellow ears of corn. Later threshing or butchering is in progress or loads of produce are starting for market. Ox-teams are plodding homeward with winter wood or clearing stone from the upland farms. Here and there the turnpike penetrates a belt of late autumn woodland or passes along some ridge with enchanting view over hill and dale. The ear notes the low

whistle of the quail or chatter of squirrels gathering the falling nuts, while high overhead is an occasional triangle of wild geese from the northern lakes off for the southland.

Now and then a village is reached with its meeting house, district school, great elms and old homes; and about noon the coach-load dismount from cramped quarters at some wayside inn for dinner with mine host ever of rotund form and genial smile, then hurry off in the springless stage, rumbling on in its winding course up and down the rough roads among the hills. Sometimes a ford is crossed, and again all must alight to climb a steep slope or lift the wheels from the mire. Six such days would take the traveler from Boston to New York, and he would rejoice if not delayed by heavy storms or deep mud.

At length the fall afternoon is closing in. The sun is sinking in a bank of storm clouds behind the western hills. The coach has reached the last turn in the road, and the cheery sight of the village spire gleaming in the sunset comes into view. The wayworn traveler joyfully hears once more the stage horn announce to the postmaster the coming mail, and bidding the landlord serve the evening meal; while the good natured driver gathers up the reins as the steaming, jaded team make the finishing sweep across the tavern yard—the crowning effort to a day of toil.

A short walk down the main street across the brook and up the slope beyond brings us to grandfather's. It is one of those stately *old homesteads*, painted red, with several gables, wings and lean-tos—contributions of the different generations which have made it their home. From the hillside it overlooks the mill

pond and nestles under some large protecting locust trees. A neat stone wall extends in front and runs away, branching and intersecting through the farm. During their season in various nooks of the dooryard beds of crocuses, snow-drops, hollyhocks, peonies, lilies, pinks and roses, yellow and white, amid box and other shrubbery, know the fostering care of grandmother. At one side is the friendly old orchard and garden. The large barns are just across the road and the farm lands stretch out on either side. There, too, are the well-curb and wood-pile. The porch is built into the house, and on the door the brass knocker—a smiling face in bas-relief with projecting arms and hands clasped indicative of the hospitality dwelling within. Swallows are wheeling their fitful flight about the chimney top, and from the gathering storm clouds flakes of snow are beginning to fall.

Grandfather and *grandmother* rush forth in the twilight, with a dozen uncles, aunts and cousins who have already arrived, and pour out a welcome which only such a company and occasion can impart. Grandfather is tall, straight and hardy, his kindly face smooth and ruddy, the mouth and prominent chin display firmness and determination, the eyes are bright and thoughtful, and snowy locks falling about his temples only add to his venerable appearance, in which intelligence and spirituality seem to beam from every feature. Grandmother inherits a strong, sturdy constitution as a daughter of the Puritans who brought to America the vigorous muscle, bone and life blood of the old English yeomanry. Her home displays a high regard for order and for the dignity of domestic duties, and her conscientious attention to household cares has never appeared as a detraction to her high mental qualities.