

FOOTING IT IN FRANCONIA

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Footing It in Franconia by Bradford Torrey

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BRADFORD TORREY

**FOOTING IT
IN FRANCONIA**

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BY
BRADFORD TORREY

"And now each man bestride his hobby, and
dust away his bells to what tune he pleases."

CHARLES LAMB.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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1901

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W. L. G. ...

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FOOTING IT IN FRANCONIA

AUTUMN

“There did they dwell,
As happy spirits as were ever seen ;
If but a bird, to keep them company,
Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,
As pleased as if the same had been a *Maiden-queen.*”

WORDSWORTH.

FIVE or six hours of pleasant railway travel, up the course of one river valley after another, — the Merrimac, the Pemigewasset, the Baker, the Connecticut, and finally the Ammonoosuc, — not to forget the best hour of all, on the shores of Lake Winnipisaukee, the spacious blue water now lying full in the sun, now half concealed by a fringe of woods, with mountains and hills, Chocorua, Paugus, and the rest, shifting their places beyond it, appearing and disappearing as the train follows the winding track, — five

or six hours of this delightful panoramic journey, and we leave the cars at Littleton. Then a few miles in a carriage up a long, steep hill through a glorious autumn-scented forest, the horses pausing for breath as one water-bar after another is surmounted, and we are at the height of land, where two or three highland farmers have cleared some rocky acres, built houses and painted them, and planted gardens and orchards. As we reach this happy clearing all the mountains stand facing us on the horizon, and below, between us and Lafayette, lies the valley of Franconia, toward which, again through stretches of forest, we rapidly descend. At the bottom of the way Gale River comes dancing to meet us, babbling among its boulders, — more boulders than water at this end of the summer heats, — in its cheerful uphill progress. Its uphill progress, I say, and repeat it; and if any reader disputes the word, then he has never been there and seen the water for himself, or else he is an unfortunate who has lost his child's heart (without which there is no kingdom of heaven for a man), and no longer lives by faith in

his own senses. On the spot I have called the attention of many to it, and they have every one agreed with me. Mountain rivers have attributes of their own; or, possibly, the mountains themselves lay some spell upon the running water or upon the beholder's eyesight. Be that as it may, Lafayette all the while draws nearer and nearer, we going one way and Gale River the other, until, after leaving the village houses behind us, we alight almost at its base. Solemn and magnificent, it is yet most companionable, standing thus in front of one's door, the first thing to be looked at in the morning, and the last at night.

The last thing to be *thought* of at night is the weather, — the weather and what goes with it and depends upon it, the question of the next day's programme. In a hill country meteorological prognostications are proverbially difficult; but we have learned to "hit it right" once in a while; and, right or wrong, we never omit our evening forecast. "It looks like a fair day to-morrow," says one. "Well," answers the other, with no thought of discourtesy in the use of the sub-