

Poems from Ainsworth

With foreword by David Earnshaw

Charlotte Ann Mort was the great Aunt of David Earnshaw – on his mother’s side). On the 1911 census she was thirty years of age, living with her father, mother and seven siblings at Rothwell, Ainsworth. At that time there was Rothwell Farm, occupied by the Bulcock family, and another dwelling known as Rothwell. Also, on the census, her occupation was listed as confectioner baker. In 1915, she was running a confectionery and baker’s shop at number one, Church Street. It isn’t known how long she ran the shop, but in 1921, at the age of forty, she emigrated to America, sailing from Liverpool, on the second of May, on the “Carmania” to New York. She stayed with a Mrs William Hardman at Arnold Circle, Cambridge, Massachusetts. (maybe they had gone out from Ainsworth some time before)

In 1922 she met and married Rufus Alden Simmons in Fitchburg, Worcester, Massachusetts, his ancestors having left England on the Mayflower to Plymouth Massachusetts, settling at a place they names Duxbury, after Duxbury Hall, Chorley, home of the Standish family, who were also on the Mayflower

Charlotte wrote from America, about her memories of Ainsworth, to Mrs Minnie Haygarth, nee Green, who was born at Old Barn Farm in December 1880 and later lived in Elton.

Here are the copies of what passed between them.

*A Foreword to her poem "Rendezvous With Memory" by
Charlotte A. Simmons.*

*Time mellows memory with a hallowed charm. Griefs and
disappointments are all swept away and merge themselves into
the happiest and most pleasant things you have remembered. I
think most English folk will always be English as long as they
live; how can you be otherwise when it is in your heart and
blood? It has been easy for me to divide my loyalties because my
husband's people also love England, being of Colonial stock. The
loyal love I now give to America has in no way diminished my
love for England - thank God we are allies.*

*How often I have closed my eyes and am back again. My
happiest memories always seem to be around Old Barn
Farm. How strange my own kith and kin should now be sheltered
there - strange yet not so strange. Well I remember all the things
I have written in my poem. It is easy to write about the things
you love. I still hear the cuckoo call in Spring while roaming
around there and hear the wind whispering through the tall
grass, bending and swaying in the meadows like a grassy sea, and
the little clear brook tinkling and rippling along Knowsley and
through the Paddock Leach meadows; the little starry flowers
which we children called Mayflowers that grew in the fields
near the middle Whitehead Lodge.*

*Atop the hill over the lodge near Windsor I have often stood and
heard the children's voices float up from the village; the old
Rothwell Farm where I spent my young womanhood; the Chapel
and Churches and graveyards all have their tender memories.
Joys and sorrows all seem as one now but the greatest joy of all
is to have remembered.*

A RENDEZVOUS WITH MEMORY

By Charlotte A. Simmons.

(SEE MORT).

*There's a tap, tap, tapping on my window pane,
The earth is sodden with the ceaseless rain,
While I, in petulance, grumble and complain
And treat the world with sadness and disdain.
In retrospection, grim and dour,
I while away a dreary hour.
Then stretch myself upon my couch
And soon forget my foolish grouch
When Morpheus' arms doth me entice,
I find in them a dreamer's paradise.*

*Then Memory came and had her day,
Was bound that she would lead the way.
So off we sailed to England's shore
To visit scenes I loved of yore.
I said "I've left my heart behind,
Tis but my roots I go to find".
But Memory said, while looking shy,
"I think you've got your thoughts awry
For roots can spread and hearts can share,
And loyalty not always wear.
But memory never shuts an eye,
She'll linger as the years roll by".*

*Away we sped to country lanes,
Where maidens walk with favored swains.
And hawthorn, blooming in the month of May,
Sheds fragrant incense on our way;
Lanes that led to my girlhood home
Where I learned lessons not from tome;
But by the art of making do,
Did many a thrifty thought ensue,
And stretching ends until they met
Taught lessons that are with me yet.*

Glad laughter from the old rooms rung,
And many a merry song was sung;
But ofttimes grief would come to dwell
And many tears of sorrow fell
Thus life's made up of many things
That with them education brings.

The well loved lawn with shady tree,
A refuge for the bird and bee;
There in the velvet dusk of summer's eve
We'd sit and dream and fancies weave.

The double hawthorn and the rose so fair,
The humble flowerlet and the blossom rare;
All had a charm to please the eye
And sooth the heart of such as I.
However far our footsteps roam,
Our hearts and thoughts will travel home.

Now once again we turn our feet
Uphill towards the village street,
And soon three churches come in view
Where humble villagers their creeds pursue.
Thrice blessed they, whose feet have trod
Three separate paths that led to God.
While learning lessons Christians should,
They come to see, in all is good.

I well remember "Sermons Day",
When kith and kin would make their way
To worship at a well loved shrine,
Then afterwards would meet and dine
Around the family table, and repeat
The doings since they last did meet;

The graveyard with its well trimmed grave
Reflected back the love they gave
To loved ones gone but not forgot
They flower bedecked each sacred spot;
Each outward sign sincerely meant,
Ne'er tinged with maudlin sentiment.

*We now behold the village school,
To turn out scholars was its rule,
And those who went with good intent
In after years did not repent.
No modern slick efficiency
Could duplicate its constancy.*

*With purpose firm the master meant
To fit each child for betterment,
And, though his heart was kindly bent,
Could punish with the best intent.
And I, poor laggard, now have learned
To treasure learning once I spurned.
I thought my hands would serve my head
But found takes both to make my bread.*

*At Whitsuntide, the "walking day",
Each Sunday School did then hold sway,
With band and banner, you to greet
Proudly parade the village street;
With pretty children looking sweet,
You'd gladly join the Godly Fete.
Then joyful hymns they'd pause and sing
And make God's sunny welkin ring.
These simple pleasures I recall
When costly joys begin to pall.*

*There down the street we see the mill
Where toilers work with earnest will.
No transient stot and jetsam these
Tossed up from labor's truculent seas.
Not their's to lust for miners' gold;
Not their's to grasp and then withhold;
But live, and let live, was their way
And save a little for a rainy day.
They did not wear the costly gown
Or visit high-born folks in town,
But they had pride and beauty too
Wrought from the simple life they knew.*

We had our craftsmen, worthy of note,
Scholars learned, who taught and wrote.
We had our saints, whose feet have trod
A steadfast path that leads to God.
Alas, we had some sinners too;
Where'er you go you find a few.
For are we not all prone to stray,
Mistakes oft help us find the way,
Forgiveness comes on angels' wings
To lift us up to nobler things.

Now once again we hear the cuckoo call
From oak tree standing brave and tall.
The twittering birds their love notes sing;
The sleepy bat again takes wing
And echoing voices seem to ring
As Nature takes its one last fling;
While evening shadows softly cast
Their deepening darkness o'er the day that's past.

And now atop a hill we stand
Mid the enchantment of a shadowy land,
Where children's voices from villages around
Cast up a myriad of sound.

A tired farmer draws the great barn door;
Done are his tasks - the day is o'er.
Then to his house and table doth repair
Where I, a guest, was often welcome there.
The busy mother, with her kindly eyes
In whose blue depths keen understanding lies,
Gives you a welcome full of friendly grace
And at her table bids you take a place.
Then we would gather at the friendly board,
Where many a quip or jest was scored;
There each repeat their scrap of news
As each the doings of the day reviews.
They'd tell of sick folks and of babes new born,
And many a secret gift was borne
From pantry or from mother's store
To folks she thought would need them more.

*Then in the lamplight we would gather round
A fire where warmth and peace abound.
We'd sew and knit as needles clicked
While all the time the old clock ticked.*

*We'd then discuss books and creeds
And all the things a sad world needs,
While Shep lay dozing at our feet
Enjoying this, his evening treat.
But when his master went his nightly round,
To see that kine were safe and sound,
He beckoned - Shep would get up slow,
Tail drooping, looking full of woe;
And thus the old clock in the corner licked away
The pleasant hours we could not stay.*

*Once more I hear the village band
When Christmas snows bedeck the land,
And as the old year died away,
How it would play at break of day
To greet a year just newly born,
And usher in the smiling morn.*

*We had our Christmas parties and our plays;
Will Shakespeare lived again those days,
Our actors and actresses - native born,
For them I surely blow my horn;
For 'twas a feather in our caps,
To have such brilliant acting chaps.*

*Since then I've travelled over land and sea,
And many unexpected things have come to be,
I knew not what the future would unfold,
But now I read it as a story told.*

*Thus war once more did lay its cruel hand
And held our hearts within its crushing band.
We bow our heads in agonising grief,
Then bravely hold them up - God sends to us relief.*

- Pause -

Sleep peaceful village, on England's breast,
As velvet darkness woos thee to thy rest.
May twinkling stars with eyes that never close
Watch o'er and guard thee in thy night's repose.

If gathering clouds again should cast their gloom,
Shelter it, Oh Lord, and all its fears entomb;
Keep those dear loved ones they have given, Lord,
The peace they died for is their just reward.

In echoing cloisters may their footsteps fall
As if in answer to the fond heart's call.
They threw the torch, but we will hold it high,
"We pass it on," shall be our clarion cry.

So now our rendezvous is o'er,
Again we seek New England's shore,
And heart and thought again combine
Past and present like clinging vine.

From ^{DURKLEY} ~~Durkley~~ Hall in Lancashire (Lancashire)
Came Myles Standish, the pioneer.
With the Mullins and Aldens he set sail
On the Mayflower, braving storm and gale.

They founded friendships, deep and strong,
Wrought from hardship, peril, wrong,
From Plymouth Rock, of fame and lore,
They viewed New England's rock-bound shore.

Then set to work to found a home
And worship under God's blue dome.
Then silent John and doughty Myles
Became enamored by Priscilla's smiles.

So Myles sent John to intercede
And for Myles' cause to speak and plead,
But Priscilla, sharp of tongue and wit,
There at her spinning wheel did sit.

*With blushing cheek and lowered lid,
Said "Speak for yourself John", and so he did.
But Sarah Alden, Priscilla's daughter
Answered "Yes", when Myles' son sought her.*

*This ancestry now blends with mine
And I respect another line;
From East or West beyond the sea
Why should we not all come to be
New Englanders of high degree.*

*Now Morpheus bids me fond adieu
For all around there's great ado;
The raindrops now have stopped their patter,
The gloomy clouds begin to scatter.*

*The birds are singing in the trees,
The scent of flowers is on the breeze;
I look around my cosy cot
And thank the Lord for all I've got.*

*The breath of peace is in the air,
Rejoicing now is everywhere.
Bells are ringing, children singing,
Thank God, Thank God, these bells are bringing.*

- Peace -

A REPLY TO THE POEM "A RENDEZVOUS WITH MEMORY"
FROM MRS. MINNIE HARGARTH (NCE. GREEN) MINNIE'S AUNTIE

My Dear, you gave me great surprise,
I surely opened wide my eyes
When I perused your manuscript;
I had not dreamt you had the gift
Of writing thus, in verse or rhyme,
Yet hid your talent all the time.

Your memory must have served you well,
For after years and years, you tell
Of incidents of long ago:
The closing of the old barn door,
Of Dad and Mother in our home,
Of how our dear old dog would come
And lay his head upon our feet
Yet each new comer he would greet.
And tho we had our joke and jest
You were an ever welcome guest.

As I walked up the village street
Today, I almost thought we'd meet.
Your lines had brought you very near
And so I want to say, My dear,
If in this world we do not meet
We will in Heaven each other greet.
And I shall hear you say, I'm sure,
"How are the folks at Cockey Moor?"

THE ALDEN HOME

By Charlotte A. Simmons

Who has the inanity to say
"Tis but an old house anyway?"
Then turn away with cool disdain,
Uninterested, thoughtless, vain.

How blind, how pitifully blind
Are they who turn without a look behind
To see the unforgotten past
Blazoned on timbers made to last.

Walls that sheltered and bound tight
Courageous souls who won the fight
A conquered wilderness proclaims their fame,
Their heritage a glorious name.

Enshrined in many a song and story,
Brave pioneers of New England's glory
Who would not feel the thrill of pride?
A reverence I'd not deign to hide.

I quietly enter at the door
And softly tread the broad board floor
Which Pilgrim children pattered o'er
And buckled shoes had trod before.

Where mother at her spinning sat
And there she stitched the braided mat
Whose many brightly coloured hue
From lowly shrubs the dye she drew.

Thus she contrived by thrifty art
Good cheer and comfort to impart.
How oft she heard the tempest roar
The blizzard howling round the door.

While freezing snow around her lay
She thought of England far away.
And oft a tear ran down her cheek
As in the Bible she would seek
And having sought would surely find
New courage for the heart and mind.

I love the cradle and the trundle bed,
The table where those dear ones fed.
The household penates crudely wrought

Of all they prayed for and had wished to be,
Godly, just, but bondage free.
Their creed of meek simplicity
Brooked no proud king's duplicity.

Though hidden dangers round them lurked,
No hard or dangerous task they shirked.
They trusted to God's arm alone
To strengthen and uphold their own.

As Winter howled its last goodbye
The Spring came in with sunny sky.
It warmed the mountains and the hills
And from their sides gushed singing rills.

Then from the waking earth there came
The sweet Spring flowers of Pilgrim name
Like a Pilgrim maiden with beautiful face
The mayflower bore its name with grace.

The birds with joyous songs of Spring
New comfort to their heart did bring,
And faith their weakened strength renewed
As sites for future homes they viewed.

At first they built log cabin homes,
Then later sought more fruitful loams.
So o'er to Duxbury, Aldens went
First family of that settlement.

Upon a gently rising hill
Their hand-hewn home is standing still.

And from its windows as I gazed,
I thought of all the paths they blazed.
I felt the thrill of race and brood
And hallowed reverence for their creed.

The paths that we can follow still
To meet and worship as we will,
In meekness and humility,
In safety and tranquility.

FNIS

