



Grace  
Livingston  
Hill

A  
JOURNEY  
OF  
DISCOVERY  
*and Other Stories*

**Grace Livingston Hill**

# **A Journey of Discovery and Other Stories**

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# A Chautauqua Idyl

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## Introductory Note

My Dear Mr. Lothrop:—

I have read Miss Livingston's little idyl with much pleasure. I cannot but think that if the older and more sedate members of the Chautauquan circles will read it, they will find that there are grains of profit in it; hidden grains, perhaps, but none the worse for being hidden at the first, if they only discover them. Miss Livingston has herself evidently understood the spirit of the movement in which the Chautauquan reading circles are engaged. That is more than can be said of everybody who expresses an opinion upon them. It is because she expresses no opinion, but rather tells, very simply, the story of the working out of the plan, that I am glad you are going to publish her little poem: for poem it is, excepting that it is not in verse or in rhyme.

Believe me,  
Very truly yours,  
Edward Everett Hale.

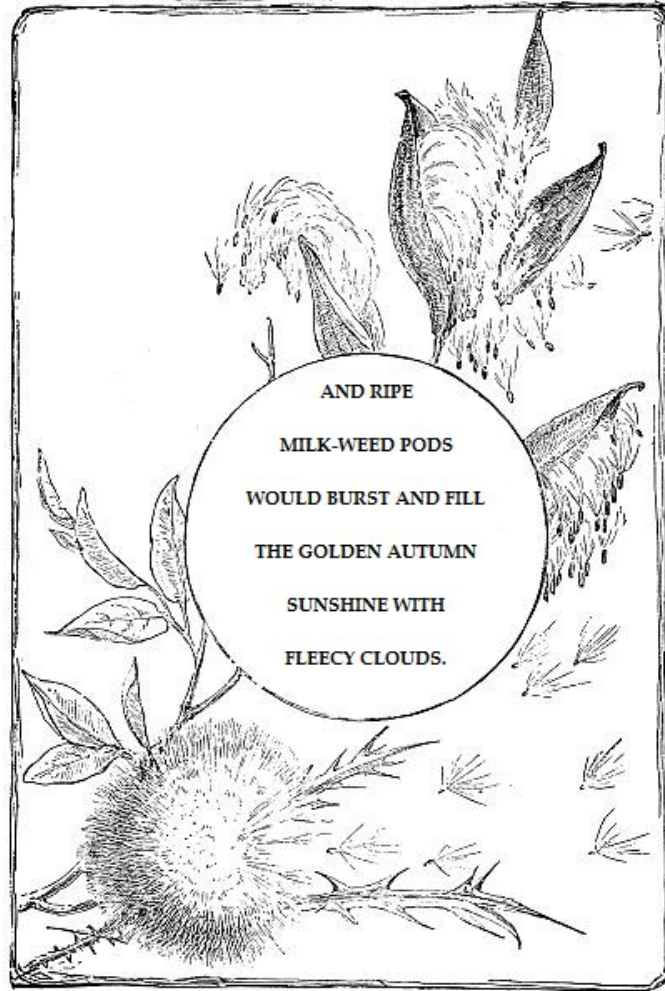
## **A Chautauqua Idyl**

Down in a rocky pasture, on the edge of a wood, ran a little brook, tinkle, tinkle, over the bright pebbles of its bed. Close to the water's edge grew delicate ferns, and higher up the mossy bank nestled violets, blue and white and yellow.

Later in the fall the rocky pasture would glow with golden-rod and brilliant sumach, and ripe milk-weed pods would burst and fill the golden autumn sunshine with fleecy clouds. But now the nodding buttercups and smiling daisies held sway, with here and there a tall mullein standing sentinel.

It was a lovely place: off in the distance one could see the shimmering lake, to whose loving embrace the brook was forever hastening, framed by beautiful wooded hills, with a hazy purple mountain back of all.

But the day was not lovely. The clouds came down to the earth as near as they dared, scowling ominously. It was clear they had been drinking deeply. A sticky, misty rain filled the air, and the earth looked sad, very sad.

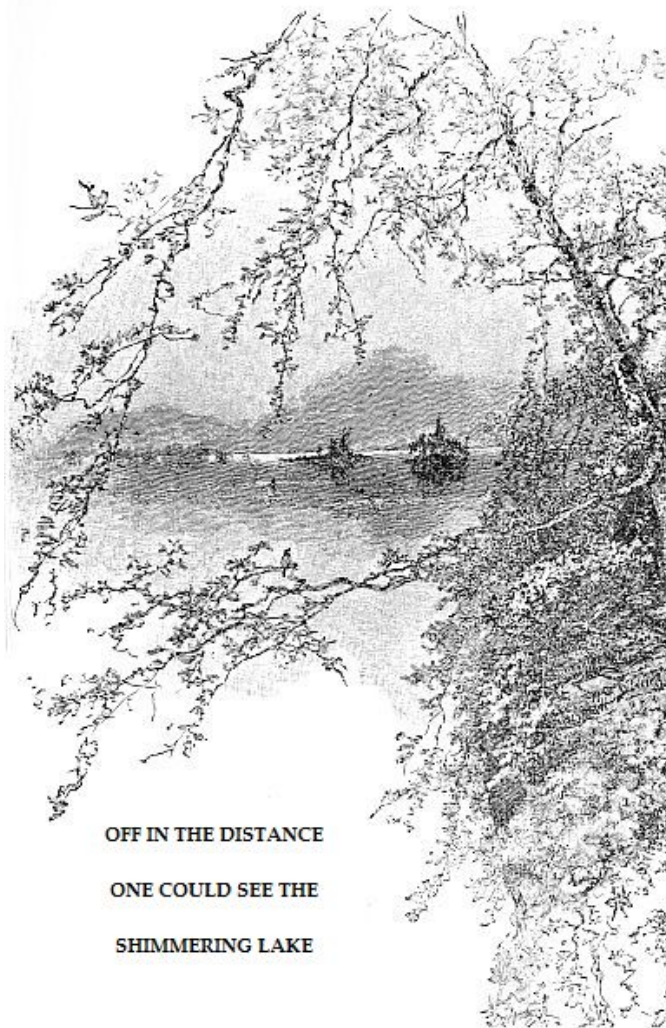


The violets had put on their gossamers and drawn the hoods up over their heads, the ferns looked sadly drabbed, and the buttercups and daisies on the opposite bank, didn't even lean across to speak to their neighbors, but drew their yellow caps and white bonnets further over their faces, drooped their heads and wished for the rain to be over. The wild roses that grew on a bush near the bank hid under their leaves. The ferns went to sleep; even the trees leaned disconsolately over the brook and wished for the long, rainy afternoon to be over, while little tired wet birds in their branches never stirred, nor even spoke to each other, but stood hour after hour on one foot, with their shoulders hunched up, and one eye shut.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last a little white violet broke the damp stillness.

“O dear!” she sighed, “this is so tiresome, I wish we could do something nice. Won’t some one please talk a little?”



No one spoke, and some of the older ferns even scowled at her, but little violet was not to be put down. She turned her hooded face on a tall pink bachelor button growing by her side.

This same pink button was a new-comer among them. He had been brought, a little brown seed, by a fat robin, early

in the spring, and dropped down close by this sweet violet.

“Mr. Button,” she said, “you have been a great traveller. Won’t you tell us some of your experiences?”

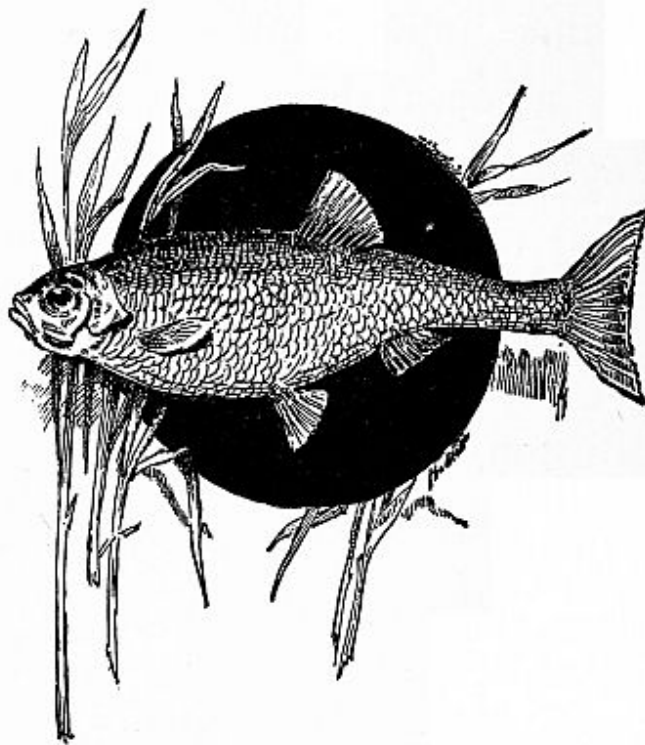
“Yes, yes; tell, tell, tell,” babbled the brook.

The warm wind clapped him on the shoulder, and shook him gently, crying,—“Tell them, old fellow, and I’ll fan them a bit while you do it.”

“Tell, tell,” chirped the birds overhead.

“O yes!” chorused the buttercups and daisies.

The little birds opened one eye and perked their heads in a listening attitude, and all the violets put their gossamer hoods behind their ears so that they might hear better.



“Well, I might tell you about Chautauqua,” said pink bachelor thoughtfully.

“And what is Chautauqua?” questioned a saucy little fish who had stopped on his way to the lake to listen.



“Chautauqua is a place, my young friend, a beautiful place, where I spent last summer with my family,” said the bachelor in a very patronizing tone.

“Oh! you don’t say so,” said the naughty little fish with a grimace, and sped on his way to the lake, to laugh with all the other fishes at the queer new word.

“Go on, go on, go on,” sang the brook.

“We lived in a garden by a house just outside the gates,” began Bachelor.

“What gates?” interrupted the eager daisies.

“Why, the gates of the grounds.”

“What grounds?”

“Why, the grounds of Chautauqua.”

“But who is Chautauqua?” asked the puzzled violets.

“Don’t you know? Chautauqua is a beautiful place in the woods, shut in from the world by a high fence all around it, with locked gates. It is on the shore of a lovely lake. Many people come there every year, and they have meetings, and they sing beautiful songs about birds and flowers and sky and water and God and angels and dear little babies and stars. Men come there from all over this world, and stand up and talk high, grand thoughts, and the people listen and wave their handkerchiefs till it looks like an orchard full of cherry trees in blossom.

“They have lovely singers—ladies who sing alone as sweet as birds, and they have great grand choruses of song besides, by hundreds of voices. And they have instruments to play on,—organs and pianos, and violins and harps.”

“How beautiful,” murmured the flowers.

“Tell us more,” said the brook; “tell us more, more, more, —tell, tell, tell!”

“More, more,” said the wind.