

## BLODGETT'S HOLLOW.

**A**BOUT a half-mile southeast of the old homestead of the Collins family lies a little valley. A rivulet ran through it on its way to Cantine Creek. Occasionally its southern slope was broken by the outcrop of grey sandstone ledges. It was densely wooded with oak, walnut, elm, hickory and maple trees. The bark of the squirrel, the hammering of the woodpecker and the song of the thrush enlivened it by day; the bark of the fox and the hoot of the owl relieved its solitude at night. A road, used for little more than a foot path or a trackway for a horse and rider, followed its windings to the home of a frontiersman who had cleared a few acres and opened a little farm in the forest. We children sometimes ventured into this valley on our way to gather wild blackberries, strawberries or hazelnuts in their season. There was one tree, a rock-maple, which was suggestive to our imaginations of a bloody and tragic event, which figured prominently in the traditions of the time. This tree had a history. It was a witness and an instrument in a court of Judge Lynch. The tree was known as "Blodgett's tree," and the hollow as "Blodgett's hollow."

"The dreadful hollow behind the little wood;  
The ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood."

A considerable sum of money had been stolen from the store of the Collins Brothers, and suspicion strongly pointed to a man in their employ by the name of Blodgett. The community was taken into confidence, and, after full discussion, it was decided that the evidence showed that Blodgett was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. He was blindfolded and led at night to the hollow and bound fast to the tree. He was given an opportunity to confess and disclose the hiding place of the money. He refused, denying his guilt. One of ten men, each of whom had been selected to give him ten lashes with a small hickory switch, then gave him ten blows well laid on. He was asked again to confess. He refused. Ten more blows were given him. He writhed and twisted under the torture. Bloody purple welts grid-ironed his body. At last he yielded and confessed his crime, disclosing the hiding place of the money. The money was recovered, but the conscientious Puritans were not content with the punishment of the thief and the recovery of the money. He must be kindly cared for and his "soul" must be "saved." He was placed in the large garret of the homestead and tenderly nursed. "Aunt Eliza" undertook to be his nurse and also his spiritual guide. She pleaded with him to repent of his sins, praying fervently with him. She brought her Puritan theology in full pressure upon him, nor did she desist until she felt sure that the object of her prayer was a true penitent. There is no tradition of whither, in the course of time, poor Blodgett drifted. If he ever met, in the land of shades, any of his inquisitors, did they considerately refrain from any allusion to the bloody tragedy of Blodgett's hollow? If he met "Aunt Eliza" he must have felt as Dante did toward Beatrice, for it was she who had rescued him, wrecked and adrift on the uncertain sea of life, by putting in his grasp the single spar to which he clung.