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## Personal Sketch.

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Written for the Portland Transcript.

MRS. OSGOOD OF BAR MILLS.

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One of our Maine women has just died, and "gone into the world of light" about whom I cannot resist saying a few words, her quiet life seems to me to hold so many good lessons for all the rest of us. I do not know how to tell the tale of the good deeds she wrought. I am not one of the early friends who followed her footsteps most closely, and I have no right to make this in any sense a biographical sketch of her life, except that I do know the lovely qualities of her mind and heart and how eagerly she kept her eyes fixed upon the best things. I do know how well she stood in her lot and place and "made the most," as we say, sometimes, of her advantages. Young people are apt to be wishing for wider opportunities and imagining that it is our surroundings that give us value, as if a tallow candle were any the better light in a golden candlestick! We cannot be so remote that our minds may not keep in touch with other minds to receive their help and inspiration. We can always learn to know and understand the world about us, we can follow to the skies any highway or byway of our native town. It is in the development of the will, and the gathering of great purposes, that one may make the most and the best of life. To love and look up to some friend who is wiser than we, to help and lead the friend who looks up to us; this joy may be ours, no matter how solitary, how apparently unenriched, how hard-worked and unpromising the daily life may seem in its beginning.

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My friend was warm and devoted in her friendships, coming as she did from so generous and truly hospitable a lineage. The daughter of her father and mother could hardly be selfish and narrow-minded, known as they were, and depended upon in the best sense through a wide-spread country-side. She shared a fine inheritance of character, and the loss of her young husband in the beginning of their married life only seemed to open the doors of her heart the wider and lift her to new and broader levels of friendliness. Her heart was never hopeless, but full of brave and sweet ambitions and desires for others as well as herself. She did, what we all may do; she knew intimately many of the best among our great English books, and enriched her thoughts amazingly in this way, supplementing her own love of country and birthplace, her varied out-of-door pleasures, by the stored wisdom of like-minded men and women of the past. She knew by heart much of what Wordsworth and Lowell and Emerson have said, and as her beloved garden flowers came up year by year at the feet of her great garden trees, she was able to link them with flowers and trees that the poets have loved and sung. To her the daily walks and drives in the dear bit of country, that she knew best, were so truly interesting, so full of association and food for thought that she never really needed to see new countries or to follow new paths. Her own library held books enough to be an endless delight and to make her wise with true wisdom. The outlook from her own door, of woodlands and the slope of green fields and river shores, the ceaseless sound of the falling waters of the Saco, these possessed for her unfeeling attractions, they were new and delightful to her until the very end.

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I believe that it was because she possessed a great gift for appreciation that her life was so full of happiness and of the power of giving happiness to others. She said once to a friend that she had no gifts except the gift of appreciation, and it was certainly true that she had an unerring instinct for what was best and highest in conduct and in achievement. When I saw her first, away from home, I could not help marking at once her fine, open expression and the pleasantness of her face, and a certain quaintness in her manner of speaking which made me say to myself "this is some dear soul from a quiet country home who has her own way of enjoying and looking on at city life." We country persons know each other by a pleased sense of comradeship, but I had heard unusual praise of this new acquaintance, I knew what interesting people were numbered among her friends, and with what pleasure her yearly visits to Boston and Cambridge were looked forward to. And presently, in her own way, she said most striking things. She was not impatient with trivial talk, or whatever was outside her own experience, though she rarely stopped to waste the precious moments, but eagerly drew the conversation, you never could tell exactly how, toward the broadest and most vital subjects. She would find out if you had read Emerson's last great lecture.

or seen some great play, or knew before she did of a great book for which she had been waiting. You found,--when she went away, that you had been telling the best you knew about such things as these, and were full of eagerness to hear whatever she had to say. She had a power of getting from other people the best that they had to give; if she found herself one of a group not interested just then in the things that she loved most, she listened and smiled and felt a little apart, but now and then she gaily told a delightful country story, or gave you a brief reminiscence of provincial wit. She was always companionable and a happy listener, but if she had her own way the talk was serious; you were uplifted by the unaffected seriousness, the brave simplicity of this sweet country lady. She was full of warmheartedness, of good sense and large sympathy. She really loved her books and her woods and fields and flowers; she loved the friends to whom she looked up, and those who looked up to her. I believe that she must have been the kindest and best of neighbors and interested herself most heartily in the life of her own village, but there was something in her fine nature that responded to the best friendship. Wherever she was, there was something that won the deep respect and affection of James Russell Lowell, the husband of one of her earliest and best-loved friends, of James T. Fields, and many others well-known to the world and truly eminent. She was so simple, so unpretending and undemanding, so thoughtless of herself in all the usual ways, that to see the letters she must have had from such friends, which, beautiful in their confidence and their recognition of her rare traits, would surprise those who thought they knew Mrs. Osgood, and yet only knew her slightly.

As I write these words, I like to think that uncommon as my friend's character may have been, she is after all a type of what Maine womanhood should and sometimes does grow to be in the shelter of our quiet shore and inland villages. As I look back I see that a great deal of the value of her life and character was ministered to by her love of reading, and because she believed in reading the best books. She was not a scholar, she was hardly to be called a student; though she knew and loved her books so well. Yet she nobly educated herself by steady reading of good books, and grew to be a book lover. She never complained of her library's being small or her social opportunities being few; the world of books to her was always near, and she could always open its enchanted doors and find the best companionship.

It makes but little difference where any of us live if we are only living on the right level. My friend seemed to find the best of everything within her reach though she seldom left her country home, but whatever she did and wherever she went, she added a new bit of gold to her store of happiness. She looked for and kept the best that was thought and said in her world. She was always giving to those who asked and blessing them out of this store of happiness and joy. There is many a Maine garden that will cherish more than ever some rare blossoming plant that was her gift, but how many other flowers of sincerity, of sympathy, of sweet suggestion to young people she

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her world. She was always giving to those who asked and blessing them out of this store of happiness and joy. There is many a Maine garden that will cherish more than ever some rare blossoming plant that was her gift, but how many other flowers of sincerity, of sympathy, of sweet suggestion to young people, she scattered all along her way!

Her charming letters were full of memorable things. Where shall we find any one now who knows the coming and going of spring and summer as she knew it; as Gilbert White knew his Szeborne birds, so did she know the wild flowers of her Hollis woods. She wrote of her daily life and her dear housemates, and her beloved garden; of the friends who went and who came as life flowed on, of her own wise thoughts and the books she read and every word was said with perfect fitness and charm. I for one shall sadly miss the coming of these letters, and I for one shall not fail to wish as I have wished many a time already, that I might have given to this dear woman half the pleasure, half the suggestion toward right living and true happiness in a country life, that she always gave to me.

—Sarah Orne Jewell.