



## Bits of Gossip

*Rebecca Harding Davis*

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## **Bits of Gossip** Rebecca Harding Davis

“Bits of Gossip” is an autobiography by Rebecca Harding Davis. But rather than just being an account of her life, it is an amazing historical look into the people she knew and the times she lived in. Among her acquaintances were Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes (father of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.). Mrs. Harding Davis lived during the times of Abraham Lincoln, Grover Cleveland, Edgar Allan Poe, Booker T. Washington, Nellie Custis, Dolly Madison, Henry Clay, Horace Greeley, Walt Whitman and many others. She lived through the American Civil War and knew of the Underground Railroad. Her account of the times is a fascinating trip through American history of the mid to late 1800s.

This eBook edition was carefully prepared by referring to an original text to correct scanning errors that are common in other versions. Old spellings and word usages have been preserved, but obvious spelling and other typesetting mistakes in the original have been corrected.

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Here is an excerpt:

I remember listening during one long summer morning to Louisa Alcott’s father as he chanted paeans to the war, the “armed angel which was wakening the nation to a lofty life unknown before.”

We were in the little parlor of the Wayside, Mr. Hawthorne’s house in Concord. Mr. Alcott stood in front of the fireplace, his long gray hair streaming over his collar, his pale eyes turning quickly from one listener to another to hold them quiet, his hands waving to keep time with the orotund sentences which had a stale, familiar ring as if often repeated before. Mr. Emerson stood listening, his head sunk on his breast, with profound submissive attention, but Hawthorne sat astride of a chair, his arms folded on the back, his chin dropped on them, and his laughing, sagacious eyes watching us, full of mockery.

I had just come up from the border where I had seen the actual war; the filthy spewings of it; the political jobbery in Union and Confederate camps; the malignant personal hatreds wearing patriotic masks, and glutted by burning homes and outraged women; the chances in it, well improved on both sides, for brutish men to grow more brutish, and for honorable gentlemen to degenerate into thieves and sots. War may be an armed angel with a mission, but she has the personal habits of the slums. This would-be seer who was talking of it, and the real seer who listened, knew no more of war as it was, than I had done in my cherry-tree when I dreamed of bannered legions of crusaders debouching in the misty fields.

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