

CHAPTER XXVII

CHILDREN'S WOOD

“ . . . but there would be children always . . . ”

Realizing that the sands of time were beginning to run out, Albert Annett made his will. He wished to leave a bequest to the town of Jaffrey — for he loved Jaffrey — something tangible, something permanent, that would make the town a little better and richer for his having been in it. But what would it be?

Behind his house and its spacious grounds was the thirty-acre pasture which he and Mrs. Annett had acquired some years before. It had a goodly growth of trees and shrubs, and each spring they had delighted in the beauty of the rhodora blooming there and watched the birds returning when the buds in the trees were bursting open.

And so an idea was born. Why not leave that pasture to the town of Jaffrey in trust for all its children to enjoy as they had done?

His idealism carried him far into the future and what he saw was a continuous procession of children, one generation after another growing into manhood and womanhood, but there would be children always, and, so long as the world endures, there would be a town of Jaffrey.

And so he drew up his will. It was the children of his day and of all the days to come, and the town of Jaffrey through them, that he wanted to remember in his last testament. The idea came to him. Why not have the town as a trustee accept the bequest in behalf of all the generations of children. They would be the children of the town and, in a way, the children he never had. He did not want to vest the title in the name of the school district as something perhaps not so enduring as the town itself. And so it came to pass that for thirty years the Children's Wood has been possessed, as he intended it should, by the town of Jaffrey in behalf of Jaffrey's children.

He wanted the pasture used by all the children, regardless

of race or creed, and by the school children especially as an integral part of their education in the study of nature, flora and fauna, and of the trees indigenous to the region. His own love of trees was further evidenced by the row of elms that line the road along the spacious lawn of the house he lived in. These he started from leaf nearly forty years ago and transplanted where they are now growing.

The Children's Wood is the property of all the children of Jaffrey for all time, the title only invested in the town in their behalf, according to the terms of the will. The school board was designated to appoint a permanent committee of three members to have charge of the Children's Wood, with the continuing power to fill vacancies in the permanent committee. Today (1967) this committee consists of Headmaster Joseph D. LeBlanc, Charles E. Chamberlain, and Lester F. Hammond.

At the annual town meeting in 1955 the town voted the sum of \$75.00 for the purpose of furnishing drinking water service to the Children's Wood.

Mr. Annett's bequest to the town and its children is a sacred trust, and may the Children's Wood remain endlessly as a legacy to the town and its children from a man who loved them both and loved also trees.

During the years that Charles E. Chamberlain was on the Conant High School faculty, much interest in the use of Children's Wood was manifested by the instructor and students. Under Mr. Chamberlain's instruction and supervision paths and trails were laid over the hill and the various species of trees were identified with metal tags. The Children's Wood also provided a study of hundreds of wild flowers, as, having both a southern and northern exposure, it abounds in wild flowers. Bird life was also studied. Hopefully, further use of the Children's Wood will be made in accordance with the wishes of the donor.

In 1967 two articles in the annual and school district warrants called for the transfer of the Children's Wood from the town to the district. The fallacy of these articles was called to the attention of the Jaffrey voters by Irma A. Royce through the columns of the Monadnock Ledger and Alice E. E. Lehtinen over the tele-

phone to town and school district officials and other influential persons. The latter was there when Albert Annett made his will and to her he explained the details of the bequest concerning the Children's Wood. According to the donor, the ownership of the Children's Wood was invested in the every growing generations of Jaffrey children and not in the town of Jaffrey, the town holding title only in trust. Under these conditions, the would-be action called for in the two warrant articles were out of order and their proposed objective could not be voted affirmatively. It was voted "the action on these articles be postponed."