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Title	Spring. A girdled "clearing.
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SPRING.—A GIRDLED "CLEARING."

This is a scene characteristic of the West and Far West, but may sometimes be seen in the Atlantic States, in places remote from large cities. It represents a mode of subduing the wilderness, by what, in Virginia, is called "deadening," in other parts "girdling." A belt of the bark is cut out entirely round the tree, by which the sap is prevented from ascending, vegetation is destroyed, and the tree shortly loses its foliage. In three or four years the twigs and smaller branches become so rotten as to break or be blown off, and nothing is left but the trunk. In a few years more the roots decay, and the tree falls. This generally happens in the Spring, when the frost leaves the ground. The farmer, therefore, has to go into his prospective field—for as yet it is in a transition state—with fire, axe, and oxen, before he can till it.

The scene represents two woodmen resting, amusing themselves, it may be by recounting some exploits in wolf or bear-hunting, or other tales of frontier life, the principal and endless source of gossip in the woods of the West. The boy is in the act of applying fire, to burn asunder the part where the prostrate trees cross. When the trees are reduced into convenient lengths, they are dragged together by oxen, and rolled side by side, or upon each other, and burned, when the ashes are scattered. The "girdling" in the illustration, may have been done some seven or eight years back, so that the standing trees are few in number. The tree in the foreground is a shag bark hickory, upon which has grown a wild grape vine. The stream that laves its foot, covered the grass upon the melting of the Winter's snow, and has washed bare its pendant fibrous roots; but in Summer it will be dried up, scarcely leaving a trickling rill among the stones. Beyond the fence, in the woods, is the dog-wood tree, with its white blossoms, the soft maple with its red, and the hard or sugar-maple with its yellowish green. In the distance, and in shadow, is a log house and frame barn; the latter thatched, but the former has a birch bark roof, which is kept from curling up by long poles laid crosswise, and large stones where additional weight is required. In the wood of the extreme distance is a "clearing." The fire is consuming the touchwood in a hollow tree, leaving the sounder wood blackened and charred. The sight of a "girdled clearing" is of the most mournful, desolate, and gloomy kind; even worse than the blackened and decaying stumps of a "chopping." It is an assemblage of the ghosts of the lofty monarchs of the forest, continually reminding one of change, decay, and death.

It may be pertinent to the object of this publication, to describe the progress of a Western pioneer, hewing out of the howling wilderness an abode of civilized comfort. Winter is the time generally chosen by the settler from the Eastern States for emigration. By the time he has found his destination in the woods, Spring is near at hand; he therefore has no time to lose, especially if he is poor. With the voluntary aid of his neighbours—that is to say settlers within twenty miles of him—he erects a log cabin; he next cuts down the trees contiguous to his dwelling; and sets rapidly to work to under-brush and girdle. By the time he has done a few acres, warm days and frosty nights take place; and he has to economise to the utmost this brief period of the sap rising to make his year's supply of maple sugar, the only kind in use in the Western wilds. He will no sooner have got through, than seed time arrives; and with the fork or crotch of a tree, flattened with the aid of an axe, and bored with an augur to receive wooden pegs for teeth, he has a rudely constructed harrow, but more fitting for its use than any other kind. With this, dragged by oxen yoked together, he scratches aside the accumulated dead leaves, and scatters in his wheat and oats. The season advances; corn and potatoes are now planted wherever he can find earth enough unoccupied by roots of trees; thus his husbandry has necessarily the appearance of being conducted with the utmost irregularity and confusion. It will now be necessary to protect his labour from the inroads of his cattle by a fence, which is made by environing the whole with a continuous link of fallen trees, called a "slashing." The trees of the primitive forest stand in such close proximity to each other, that those only are selected which range, or are in a line; these are cut partly through till he comes to the last one, when the axe is plied until it presses upon the next before it: the accumulated weight causes this to fall upon the adjoining one, and so on throughout the whole line; keeping up a continual cracking, tumbling and crashing, until they are all prostrate; there is then a barrier that needs but little filling up. He has now less hurrying demands for immediate work, but the life he has chosen requires almost unremitting toil. His next care is to build a cattle shed and a barn. To aid him in this he invites his neighbours to a raising bee or frolic; when his wife proudly exhibits her skill in making pot-pies, cake, and many other gastronomical stimulants; all of which are sure of the best kinds of sauce, that of a keen appetite. Then comes harvest, and the sowing of his Winter wheat, followed by the ingathering of corn and potatoes, and winter closes in upon his labour; but though snow comes and covers the earth, the axe is heard cheerily ringing in the woods, succeeded by the thundering sound of falling trees. Thus years roll on; he grows old as his prospects brighten; for it takes a life of toil to change the gloom of the shadowy forest into the smiling cheerfulness of the open landscape.