Oldport Days

by Thomas Wentworth Higginson

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Transcriber's Note: I have closed contractions in the text, e.g., "did n't" becoming "didn't" for example; I have also added the missing period after "caress" in line 11 of page 61, and have changed "ever" to "over" in line 16 of page 121.

OLDPORT DAYS.

BY

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

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OLDPORT DAYS.

OLDPORT IN WINTER.

Our August life rushes by, in Oldport, as if we were all shot from the mouth of a cannon, and were endeavoring to exchange visiting-cards on the way. But in September, when the great hotels are closed, and the bronze dogs that guarded the portals of the Ocean House are collected sadly in the music pavilion, nose to nose; when the last four-in-hand has departed, and a man may drive a solitary horse on the avenue without a pang,—then we know that "the season" is over. Winter is yet several months away,—months of the most delicious autumn weather that the

American climate holds. But to the human bird of passage all that is not summer is winter; and those who seek Oldport most eagerly for two months are often those who regard it as uninhabitable for the other ten.

The Persian poet Saadi says that in a certain region of Armenia, where he travelled, people never died the natural death. But once a year they met on a certain plain, and occupied themselves with recreation, in the midst of which individuals of every rank and age would suddenly stop, make a reverence to the west, and, setting out at full speed toward that part of the desert, be seen no more. It is quite in this fashion that guests disappear from Oldport when the season ends. They also are apt to go toward the west, but by steamboat. It is pathetic, on occasion of each annual bereavement, to observe the wonted looks and language of despair among those who linger behind; and it needs some fortitude to think of spending the winter near such a Wharf of Sighs.

But we console ourselves. Each season brings its own attractions. In summer one may relish what is new in Oldport, as the liveries, the incomes, the manners. There is often a delicious freshness about these exhibitions; it is a pleasure to see some opulent citizen in his first kid gloves. His new-born splendor stands in such brilliant relief against the confirmed respectability of the "Old Stone Mill," the only thing on the Atlantic shore which has had time to forget its birthday! But in winter the Old Mill gives the tone to the society around it; we then bethink ourselves of the crown upon our Trinity Church steeple, and resolve that the courtesies of a bygone age shall yet linger here. Is there any other place in America where gentlemen still take off their hats to one another on the public promenade? The hat is here what it still is in Southern Europe,—the lineal successor of the sword as the mark of a gentleman. It is noticed that, in going from Oldport to New York or Boston, one is liable to be betrayed by an over-flourish of the hat, as is an Arkansas man by a display of the bowie-knife.

Winter also imparts to these spacious estates a dignity that is sometimes wanting in summer. I like to stroll over them during this epoch of desertion, just as once, when I happened to hold the keys of a church, it seemed pleasant to sit, on a week-day, among its empty pews. The silent walls appeared to hold the pure essence of the prayers of a generation, while the routine and the ennui had vanished all away. One may here do the same with fashion as there with devotion, extracting its finer flavors, if such there be, unalloyed by vulgarity or sin. In the winter I can fancy these fine houses tenanted by a true nobility; all the sons are brave, and all the daughters virtuous. These balconies have heard the sighs of passion without selfishness; those cedarn alleys have admitted only vows that were never broken. If the occupant of the house be unknown, even by name, so much the better. And from homes more familiar, what lovely childish faces seem still to gaze from the doorways, what graceful Absences (to borrow a certain poet's phrase) are haunting those windows!

There is a sense of winter quiet that makes a stranger soon feel at home in Oldport, while the prospective stir of next summer precludes all feeling of stagnation. Commonly, in quiet places, one suffers from the knowledge that everybody would prefer to be unquiet; but nobody has any such longing here. Doubtless there are aged persons who deplore the good old times when the Oldport mail-bags were larger than those arriving at New York. But if it were so now, what memories would there be to talk about? If you wish for "Syrian peace, immortal leisure,"—a place where no grown person ever walks rapidly along the street, and where few care enough for rain to open an umbrella or walk faster,—come here.

My abode is on a broad, sunny street, with a few great elms overhead, and with large old houses and grass-banks opposite. There is so little snow that the outlook in the depth of winter is often merely that of a paler and leafless summer, and a soft, springlike sky almost always spreads above. Past the window streams an endless sunny panorama (for the house fronts the chief thoroughfare between country and

town),—relics of summer equipages in faded grandeur; great, fragrant hay-carts; vast moving mounds of golden straw; loads of crimson onions; heaps of pale green cabbages; piles of gray tree-prunings, looking as if the patrician trees were sending their superfluous wealth of branches to enrich the impoverished orchards of the Poor Farm; wagons of sea-weed just from the beach, with bright, moist hues, and dripping with sea-water and sea-memories, each weed an argosy, bearing its own wild histories. At this season, the very houses move, and roll slowly by, looking round for more lucrative quarters next season. Never have I seen real estate made so transportable as in Oldport. The purchaser, after finishing and furnishing to his fancy, puts his name on the door, and on the fence a large white placard inscribed "For sale". Then his household arrangements are complete, and he can sit down to enjoy himself.

By a side-glance from our window, one may look down an ancient street, which in some early epoch of the world's freshness received the name of Spring Street. A certain lively lady, addicted to daring Scriptural interpretations, thinks that there is some mistake in the current versions of Genesis, and that it was Spring Street which was created in the beginning, and the heavens and earth at some subsequent period. There are houses in Spring Street, and there is a confectioner's shop; but it is not often that a sound comes across its rugged pavements, save perchance (in summer) the drone of an ancient hand-organ, such as might have been devised by Adam to console his Eve when Paradise was lost. Yet of late the desecrating hammer and the ear-piercing saw have entered that haunt of ancient peace. May it be long ere any such invasion reaches those strange little wharves in the lower town, full of small, black, gambrel-roofed houses, with projecting eaves that might almost serve for piazzas. It is possible for an unpainted wooden building to assume, in this climate, a more time-worn aspect than that of any stone; and on these wharves everything is so old, and yet so stunted, you might fancy that the houses had been sent down there to play during their childhood, and that nobody had ever remembered to fetch them

back.

The ancient aspect of things around us, joined with the softening influences of the Gulf Stream, imparts an air of chronic languor to the special types of society which here prevail in winter,—as, for instance, people of leisure, trades-people living on their summer's gains, and, finally, fishermen. Those who pursue this last laborious calling are always lazy to the eye, for they are on shore only in lazy moments. They work by night or at early dawn, and by day they perhaps lie about on the rocks, or sit upon one heel beside a fish-house door. I knew a missionary who resigned his post at the Isles of Shoals because it was impossible to keep the Sunday worshippers from lying at full length on the seats. Our boatmen have the same habit, and there is a certain dreaminess about them, in whatever posture. Indeed, they remind one quite closely of the German boatman in Uhland, who carried his reveries so far as to accept three fees from one passenger.

But the truth is, that in Oldport we all incline to the attitude of repose. Now and then a man comes here, from farther east, with the New England fever in his blood, and with a pestilent desire to do something. You hear of him, presently, proposing that the Town Hall should be repainted. Opposition would require too much effort, and the thing is done. But the Gulf Stream soon takes its revenge on the intruder, and gradually repaints him also, with its own soft and mellow tints. In a few years he would no more bestir himself to fight for a change than to fight against it.

It makes us smile a little, therefore, to observe that universal delusion among the summer visitors, that we spend all winter in active preparations for next season. Not so; we all devote it solely to meditations on the season past. I observe that nobody in Oldport ever believes in any coming summer. Perhaps the tide is turned, we think, and people will go somewhere else. You do not find us altering our houses in December, or building out new piazzas even in March. We wait till the people have actually come to occupy them. The preparation for visitors is made after the visitors

have arrived. This may not be the way in which things are done in what are called "smart business places." But it is our way in Oldport.

It is another delusion to suppose that we are bored by this long epoch of inactivity. Not at all; we enjoy it. If you enter a shop in winter, you will find everybody rejoiced to see you—as a friend; but if it turns out that you have come as a customer, people will look a little disappointed. It is rather inconsiderate of you to make such demands out of season. Winter is not exactly the time for that sort of thing. It seems rather to violate the conditions of the truce. Could you not postpone the affair till next July? Every country has its customs; I observe that in some places, New York for instance, the shopkeepers seem rather to enjoy a "field-day" when the sun and the customers are out. In Oldport, on the contrary, men's spirits droop at such times, and they go through their business sadly. They force themselves to it during the summer, perhaps,—for one must make some sacrifices,—but in winter it is inappropriate as strawberries and cream.

The same spirit of repose pervades the streets. Nobody ever looks in a hurry, or as if an hour's delay would affect the thing in hand. The nearest approach to a mob is when some stranger, thinking himself late for the train (as if the thing were possible), is tempted to run a few steps along the sidewalk. On such an occasion I have seen doors open, and heads thrust out. But ordinarily even the physicians drive slowly, as if they wished to disguise their profession, or to soothe the nerves of some patient who may be gazing from a window.

Yet they are not to be censured, since Death, their antagonist, here drives slowly too. The number of the aged among us is surprising, and explains some phenomena otherwise strange. You will notice, for instance, that there are no posts before the houses in Oldport to which horses may be tied. Fashionable visitors might infer that every horse is supposed to be attended by a groom. Yet the tradition is, that there were once as many posts here as elsewhere, but that they were removed to get rid of

the multitude of old men who leaned all day against them. It obstructed the passing. And these aged citizens, while permitted to linger at their posts, were gossiping about men still older, in earthly or heavenly habitations, and the sensation of longevity went on accumulating indefinitely in their talk. Their very disputes had a flavor of antiquity, and involved the reputation of female relatives to the third or fourth generation. An old fisherman testified in our Police Court, the other day, in narrating the progress of a street quarrel; "Then I called him 'Polly Garter,'—that's his grandmother; and he called me 'Susy Reynolds,'—that's my aunt that's dead and gone."

In towns like this, from which the young men mostly migrate, the work of life devolves upon the venerable and the very young. When I first came to Oldport, it appeared to me that every institution was conducted by a boy and his grandfather. This seemed the case, for instance, with the bank that consented to assume the slender responsibility of my deposits. It was further to be observed, that, if the elder official was absent for a day, the boy carried on the proceedings unaided; while if the boy also wished to amuse himself elsewhere, a worthy neighbor from across the way came in to fill the places of both. Seeing this, I retained my small hold upon the concern with fresh tenacity; for who knew but some day, when the directors also had gone on a picnic, the senior depositor might take his turn at the helm? It may savor of self-confidence, but it has always seemed to me, that, with one day's control of a bank, even in these degenerate times, something might be done which would quite astonish the stockholders.

Longer acquaintance has, however, revealed the fact, that these Oldport institutions stand out as models of strict discipline beside their suburban compeers. A friend of mine declares that he went lately into a country bank, nearby, and found no one on duty. Being of opinion that there should always be someone behind the counter of a bank, he went there himself. Wishing to be informed as to the resources of his establishment, he explored desks and vaults, found a good deal of paper of different

kinds, and some rich veins of copper, but no cashier. Going to the door again in some anxiety, he encountered a casual school-boy, who kindly told him that he did not know where the financial officer might be at the precise moment of inquiry, but that half an hour before he was on the wharf, fishing.

Death comes to the aged at last, however, even in Oldport. We have lately lost, for instance, that patient old postman, serenest among our human antiquities, whose deliberate tread might have imparted a tone of repose to Broadway, could any imagination have transferred him thither. Through him the correspondence of other days came softened of all immediate solicitude. Ere it reached you, friends had died or recovered, debtors had repented, creditors grown kind, or your children had paid your debts. Perils had passed, hopes were chastened, and the most eager expectant took calmly the missive from that tranquillizing hand. Meeting his friends and clients with a step so slow that it did not even stop rapidly, he, like Tennyson's Mariana, slowly

"From his bosom drew Old letters."

But a summons came at last, not to be postponed even by him. One day he delivered his mail as usual, with no undue precipitation; on the next, the blameless soul was himself taken and forwarded on some celestial route.

Irreparable would have seemed his loss, did there not still linger among us certain types of human antiquity that might seem to disprove the fabled youth of America. One veteran I daily meet, of uncertain age, perhaps, but with at least that air of brevet antiquity which long years of unruffled indolence can give. He looks as if he had spent at least half a lifetime on the sunny slope of some beach, and the other half in leaning upon his elbows at the window of some sailor boarding-house. He is hale and broad, with a head sunk between two strong shoulders; his beard falls like snow upon his breast, longer and longer each year, while his slumberous thoughts seem to move slowly enough to watch it as it grows. I always fancy that these meditations

have drifted far astern of the times, but are following after, in patient hopelessness, as a dog swims behind a boat. What knows he of the President's Message? He has just overtaken some remarkable catch of mackerel in the year thirty-eight. His hands lie buried fathom-deep in his pockets, as if part of his brain lay there to be rummaged; and he sucks at his old pipe as if his head, like other venerable hulks, must be smoked out at intervals. His walk is that of a sloth, one foot dragging heavily behind the other. I meet him as I go to the post-office, and on returning, twenty minutes later, I pass him again, a little farther advanced. All the children accost him, and I have seen him stop—no great retardation indeed—to fondle in his arms a puppy or a kitten. Yet he is liable to excitement, in his way; for once, in some high debate, wherein he assisted as listener, when one old man on a wharf was doubting the assertion of another old man about a certain equinoctial gale, I saw my friend draw his right hand slowly and painfully from his pocket, and let it fall by his side. It was really one of the most emphatic gesticulations I ever saw, and tended obviously to quell the rising discord. It was as if the herald at a tournament had dropped his truncheon, and the fray must end.

Women's faces are apt to take from old age a finer touch than those of men, and poverty does not interfere with this, where there is no actual exposure to the elements. From the windows of these old houses there often look forth delicate, faded countenances, to which belongs an air of unmistakable refinement. Nowhere in America, I fancy, does one see such counterparts of the reduced gentlewoman of England,—as described, for instance, in "Cranford,"—quiet maiden ladies of seventy, with perhaps a tradition of beauty and bellehood, and still wearing always a bit of blue ribbon on their once golden curls,—this headdress being still carefully arranged, each day, by some handmaiden of sixty, so long a house-mate as to seem a sister, though some faint suggestion of wages and subordination may be still preserved. Among these ladies, as in "Cranford," there is a dignified reticence in respect to money-matters, and a courteous blindness to the small economies

practised by each other. It is not held good breeding, when they meet in a shop of a morning, for one to seem to notice what another buys.

These ancient ladies have coats of arms upon their walls, hereditary damasks among their scanty wardrobes, store of domestic traditions in their brains, and a whole Court Guide of high-sounding names at their fingers' ends. They can tell you of the supposed sister of an English queen, who married an American officer and dwelt in Oldport; of the Scotch Lady Janet, who eloped with her tutor, and here lived in poverty, paying her washerwoman with costly lace from her trunks; of the Oldport dame who escaped from France at the opening of the Revolution, was captured by pirates on her voyage to America, then retaken by a privateer and carried into Boston, where she took refuge in John Hancock's house. They can describe to you the Malbone Gardens, and, as the night wanes and the embers fade, can give the tale of the Phantom of Rough Point. Gliding farther and farther into the past, they revert to the brilliant historic period of Oldport, the successive English and French occupations during our Revolution, and show you gallant inscriptions in honor of their grandmothers, written on the window-panes by the diamond rings of the foreign officers.

The newer strata of Oldport society are formed chiefly by importation, and have the one advantage of a variety of origin which puts provincialism out of the question. The mild winter climate and the supposed cheapness of living draw scattered families from the various Atlantic cities; and, coming from such different sources, these visitors leave some exclusiveness behind. The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, are doubtless good things to have in one's house, but are cumbrous to travel with. Meeting here on central ground, partial aristocracies tend to neutralize each other. A Boston family comes, bristling with genealogies, and making the most of its little all of two centuries. Another arrives from Philadelphia, equally fortified in local heraldries unknown in Boston.

A third from New York brings a briefer pedigree, but more gilded. Their claims are incompatible; but there is no common standard, and so neither can have precedence. Since no human memory can retain the great-grandmothers of three cities, we are practically as well off as if we had no great-grandmothers at all.

But in Oldport, as elsewhere, the spice of conversation is apt to be in inverse ratio to family tree and income-tax, and one can hear better repartees among the boat-builders' shops on Long Wharf than among those who have made the grand tour. All the world over, one is occasionally reminded of the French officer's verdict on the garrison town where he was quartered, that the good society was no better than the good society anywhere else, but the bad society was capital. I like, for instance, to watch the shoals of fishermen that throng our streets in the early spring, inappropriate as porpoises on land, or as Scott's pirates in peaceful Kirkwall,—unwieldy, bearded creatures in oil-skin suits,—men who have never before seen a basket-wagon or a liveried groom and, whose first comments on the daintinesses of fashion are far more racy than anything which fashion can say for itself.

The life of our own fishermen and pilots remains active, in its way, all winter; and coasting vessels come and go in the open harbor every day. The only schooner that is not so employed is, to my eye, more attractive than any of them; it is our sole winter guest, this year, of all the graceful flotilla of yachts that helped to make our summer moonlights so charming. While Europe seems in such ecstasy over the ocean yacht-race, there lies at anchor, stripped and dismantled, a vessel which was excluded from the match, it is said, simply because neither of the three competitors would have had a chance against her. I like to look across the harbor at the graceful proportions of this uncrowned victor in the race she never ran; and to my eye her laurels are the most attractive. She seems a fit emblem of the genius that waits, while talent merely wins. "Let me know," said that fine, but unappreciated thinker, Brownlee Brown,—"let me know what chances a man has passed in contempt; not

what he has made, but what he has refused to make, reserving himself for higher ends."

All out-door work in winter has a cheerful look, from the triumph of caloric it implies; but I know none in which man seems to revert more to the lower modes of being than in searching for seaclams. One may sometimes observe a dozen men employed in this way, on one of our beaches, while the cold wind blows keenly off shore, and the spray drifts back like snow over the green and sluggish surge. The men pace in and out with the wave, going steadily to and fro like a pendulum, ankle-deep in the chilly brine, their steps quickened by hope or slackening with despair. Where the maidens and children sport and shout in summer, there in winter these heavy figures succeed. To them the lovely crest of the emerald billow is but a chariot for clams, and is valueless if it comes in empty. Really, the position of the clam is the more dignified, since he moves only with the wave, and the immortal being in fish-boots wades for him.

The harbor and the beach are thus occupied in winter; but one may walk for many a mile along the cliffs, and see nothing human but a few gardeners, spreading green and white sea-weed as manure upon the lawns. The mercury rarely drops to zero here, and there is little snow; but a new-fallen drift has just the same virgin beauty as farther inland, and when one suddenly comes in view of the sea beyond it, there is a sensation of summer softness. The water is not then deep blue, but pale, with opaline reflections. Vessels in the far horizon have the same delicate tint, as if woven of the same liquid material. A single wave lifts itself languidly above a reef,—a white-breasted loon floats near the shore,—the sea breaks in long, indolent curves,—the distant islands swim in a vague mirage. Along the cliffs hang great organ-pipes of ice, distilling showers of drops that glitter in the noonday sun, while the barer rocks send up a perpetual steam, giving to the eye a sense of warmth, and suggesting the comforts of fire. Beneath, the low tide reveals long stretches of golden-brown sea-weed, caressed by the lapping wave.

High winds bring a different scene. Sometimes I fancy that in winter, with less visible life upon the surface of the water, and less of unseen animal life below it, there is yet more that seems like vital force in the individual particles of waves. Each separate drop appears more charged with desperate and determined life. The lines of surf run into each other more brokenly, and with less steady roll. The low sun, too, lends a weird and jagged shadow to gallop in before the crest of each advancing wave, and sometimes there is a second crest on the shoulders of the first, as if there were more than could be contained in a single curve. Greens and purples are called forth to replace the prevailing blue. Far out at sea, great separate mounds of water rear themselves, as if to overlook the tossing plain. Sometimes these move onward and subside with their green hue still unbroken, and again they curve into detached hillocks of foam, white, multitudinous, side by side, not ridged, but moving on like a mob of white horses, neck overarching neck, breast crowded against breast.

Across those tumultuous waves I like to watch, after sunset, the revolving light; there is something about it so delicate and human. It seems to bud or bubble out of the low, dark horizon; a moment, and it is not, and then another moment, and it is. With one throb the tremulous light is born; with another throb it has reached its full size, and looks at you, coy and defiant; and almost in that instant it is utterly gone. You cannot conceive yourself to be watching something which merely turns on an axis; but it seems suddenly to expand, a flower of light, or to close, as if soft petals of darkness clasped it in. During its moments of absence, the eye cannot quite keep the memory of its precise position, and it often appears a hair-breadth to the right or left of the expected spot. This enhances the elfish and fantastic look, and so the pretty game goes on, with flickering surprises, every night and all night long. But the illusion of the seasons is just as coquettish; and when next summer comes to us, with its blossoms and its joys, it will dawn as softly out of the darkness and as softly give place to winter once more.

OLDPORT WHARVES.

Everyone who comes to a wharf feels an impulse to follow it down, and look from the end. There is a fascination about it. It is the point of contact between land and sea. A bridge evades the water, and unites land with land, as if there were no obstacle. But a wharf seeks the water, and grasps it with a solid hand. It is the sign of a lasting friendship; once extended, there it remains; the water embraces it, takes it into its tumultuous bosom at high tide, leaves it in peace at ebb, rushes back to it eagerly again, plays with it in sunshine, surges round it in storm, almost crushing the massive thing. But the pledge once given is never withdrawn. Buildings may rise and fall, but a solid wharf is almost indestructible. Even if it seems destroyed, its materials are all there. This shore might be swept away, these piers be submerged or dashed asunder, still every brick and stone would remain. Half the wharves of Oldport were ruined in the great storm of 1815. Yet not one of them has stirred from the place where it lay; its foundations have only spread more widely and firmly; they are a part of the very pavement of the harbor, submarine mountain ranges, on one of which yonder schooner now lies aground. Thus the wild ocean only punished itself, and has been embarrassed for half a century, like many another mad profligate, by the wrecks of what it ruined.

Yet the surges are wont to deal very tenderly with these wharves. In summer the sea decks them with floating weeds, and studs them with an armor of shells. In the winter it surrounds them with a smoother mail of ice, and the detached piles stand white and gleaming, like the out-door palace of a Russian queen. How softly and eagerly this coming tide swirls round them! All day the fishes haunt their shadows; all night the phosphorescent water glimmers by them, and washes with long, refluent waves along their sides, decking their blackness with a spray of stars.

Water seems the natural outlet and discharge for every landscape, and when we have followed down this artificial promontory, a wharf, and have seen the waves on three

sides of us, we have taken the first step toward circumnavigating the globe. This is our last terra firma. One step farther, and there is no possible foothold but a deck, which tilts and totters beneath our feet. A wharf, therefore, is properly neutral ground for all. It is a silent hospitality, understood by all nations. It is in some sort a thing of universal ownership. Having once built it, you must grant its use to everyone; it is no trespass to land upon any man's wharf.

The sea, like other beautiful savage creatures, derives most of its charm from its reserves of untamed power. When a wild animal is subdued to abjectness, all its interest is gone. The ocean is never thus humiliated. So slight an advance of its waves would overwhelm us, if only the restraining power once should fail, and the water keep on rising! Even here, in these safe haunts of commerce, we deal with the same salt tide which I myself have seen ascend above these piers, and which within half a century drowned a whole family in their home upon our Long Wharf.

It is still the same ungoverned ocean which, twice in every twenty-four hours, reasserts its right of way, and stops only where it will. At Monckton, on the Bay of Fundy, the wharves are built forty feet high, and at ebb-tide you may look down on the schooners lying aground upon the mud below. In six hours they will be floating at your side. But the motions of the tide are as resistless whether its rise be six feet or forty; as in the lazy stretching of the caged lion's paw you can see all the terrors of his spring.

Our principal wharf, the oldest in the town, has lately been doubled in size, and quite transformed in shape, by an importation of broad acres from the country. It is now what is called "made land,"—a manufacture which has grown so easy that I daily expect to see some enterprising contractor set up endwise a bar of railroad iron, and construct a new planet at its summit, which shall presently go spinning off into space and be called an asteroid. There are some people whom would it be pleasant to colonize in that way; but meanwhile the unchanged southern side of the pier seems

pleasanter, with its boat-builders' shops, all facing sunward,—a cheerful haunt upon a winter's day. On the early maps this wharf appears as "Queen-Hithe," a name more graceful than its present cognomen. "Hithe" or "Hythe" signifies a small harbor, and is the final syllable of many English names, as of Lambeth. Hythe is also one of those Cinque-Ports of which the Duke of Wellington was warden. This wharf was probably still familiarly called Queen-Hithe in 1781, when Washington and Rochambeau walked its length bareheaded between the ranks of French soldiers; and it doubtless bore that name when Dean Berkeley arrived in 1729, and the Rev. Mr. Honyman and all his flock closed hastily their prayer-books, and hastened to the landing to receive their guest. But it had lost this name ere the days, yet remembered by aged men, when the Long Wharf became a market. Beeves were then driven thither and tethered, while each hungry applicant marked with a piece of chalk upon the creature's side the desired cut; when a sufficient portion had been thus secured, the sentence of death was issued. Fancy the chalk a live coal, or the beast endowed with human consciousness, and no Indian, or Inquisitorial tortures could have been more fearful.

It is like visiting the houses at Pompeii, to enter the strange little black warehouses which cover some of our smaller wharves. They are so old and so small it seems as if some race of pygmies must have built them. Though they are two or three stories high, with steep gambrel-roofs, and heavily timbered, their rooms are yet so low that a man six feet high can hardly stand upright beneath the great cross-beams. There is a row of these structures, for instance, described on a map of 1762 as "the old buildings on Lopez' Wharf," and to these another century has probably brought very little change. Lopez was a Portuguese Jew, who came to this place, with several hundred others, after the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. He is said to have owned eighty square-rigged vessels in this port, from which not one such craft now sails. His little counting-room is in the second storey of the building; its wall-timbers are of oak, and are still sound; the few remaining planks are grained to resemble

rosewood and mahogany; the fragments of wall-paper are of English make. In the cross-beam, just above your head, are the pigeon-holesonce devoted to different vessels, whose names are still recorded above them on faded paper,—"Ship Cleopatra," "Brig Juno," and the like. Many of these vessels measured less than two hundred tons, and it seems as if their owner had built his ships to match the size of his counting-room.

A sterner tradition clings around an old building on a remoter wharf; for men have but lately died who had seen slaves pass within its doors for confinement. The wharf in those days appertained to a distillery, an establishment then constantly connected with the slave-trade, rum being sent to Africa, and human beings brought back. Occasionally a cargo was landed here, instead of being sent to the West Indies or to South Carolina, and this building was fitted up for their temporary quarters. It is but some twenty-five feet square, and must be less than thirty feet in height, yet it is divided into three stories, of which the lowest was used for other purposes, and the two upper were reserved for slaves. There are still to be seen the barred partitions and latticed door, making half the second floor into a sort of cage, while the agent's room appears to have occupied the other half. A similar latticed door—just such as I have seen in Southern slave-pens—secures the foot of the upper stairway. The whole small attic constitutes a single room, with a couple of windows, and two additional breathing-holes, two feet square, opening on the yard. It makes one sick to think of the poor creatures who may once have gripped those bars with their hands, or have glared with eager eyes between them; and it makes me recall with delight the day when I once wrenched away the stocks and chains from the floor of a pen like this, on the St. Mary's River in Florida. It is almost forty years since this distillery became a mill, and sixty since the slave-trade was abolished. The date "1803" is scrawled upon the door of the cage,—the very year when the port of Charleston was reopened for slaves, just before the traffic ceased. A few years more, and such horrors will seem as remote a memory in South Carolina, thank God! as in

Rhode Island.

Other wharves are occupied by mast-yards, places that seem like play-rooms for grown men, crammed fuller than any old garret with those odds and ends in which the youthful soul delights. There are planks and spars and timber, broken rudders, rusty anchors, coils of rope, bales of sail-cloth, heaps of blocks, piles of chain-cable, great iron tar-kettles like antique helmets, strange machines for steaming planks, inexplicable little chimneys, engines that seem like dwarf-locomotives, windlasses that apparently turn nothing, and incipient canals that lead nowhere. For in these yards there seems no particular difference between land and water; the tide comes and goes anywhere, and nobody minds it; boats are drawn up among burdocks and ambrosia, and the platform on which you stand suddenly proves to be something afloat. Vessels are hauled upon the ways, each side of the wharf, their poor ribs pitiably unclothed, ready for a cumbrous mantua-making of oak and iron. On one side, within a floating boom, lies a fleet of masts and unhewn logs, tethered uneasily, like a herd of captive sea-monsters, rocking in the ripples. A vast shed, that has doubtless looked ready to fall for these dozen years spreads over, half the entrance to the wharf, and is filled with spars, knee-timber, and planks of fragrant wood; its uprights are festooned with all manner of great hawsers and smaller ropes, and its dim loft is piled with empty casks and idle sails. The sun always seems to shine in a ship-yard; there are apt to be more loungers than laborers, and this gives a pleasant air of repose; the neighboring water softens all harsher sounds, the foot treads upon an elastic carpet of embedded chips, and pleasant resinous odors are in the air.

Then there are wharves quite abandoned by commerce, and given over to small tenements, filled with families so abundant that they might dispel the fears of those alarmists who suspect that children are ceasing to be born. Shrill voices resound there—American or Irish, as the case may be—through the summer noontides; and the domestic clothes-line forever stretches across the paths where imported slaves

once trod, or rich merchandise lay piled. Some of these abodes are nestled in the corners of houses once stately, with large windows and carven doorways. Others occupy separate buildings, almost always of black, unpainted wood, sometimes with the long, sloping roof of Massachusetts, oftener with the quaint "gambrel" of Rhode Island. From the busiest point of our main street, I can show you a single cottage, with low gables, projecting eaves, and sheltering sweetbrier, that seems as if it must have strayed hither, a century or two ago, out of some English lane.

Some of the more secluded wharves appear wholly deserted by men and women, and are tenanted alone by rats and boys,—two amphibious races; either can swim anywhere, or scramble and penetrate everywhere. The boys launch some abandoned skiff, and, with an oar for a sail and another for a rudder, pass from wharf to wharf; nor would it be surprising if the bright-eyed rats were to take similar passage on a shingle. Yet, after all, the human juveniles are the more sagacious brood. It is strange that people should go to Europe, and seek the society of potentates less imposing, when home can endow them with the occasional privilege of a nod from an American boy. In these sequestered haunts, I frequently meet some urchin three feet high who carries with him an air of consummate worldly experience that completely overpowers me, and I seem to shrink to the dimensions of Tom Thumb. Before his calm and terrible glance all disguises fail. You may put on a bold and careless air, and affect to overlook him as you pass; but it is like assuming to ignore the existence of the Pope of Rome, or of the London Times. He knows better. Grown men are never very formidable; they are shy and shamefaced themselves, usually preoccupied, and not very observing. If they see a man loitering about, without visible aim, they class him as a mild imbecile, and let him go; but boys are nature's detectives, and one does not so easily evade their scrutinizing eyes. I know full well that, while I study their ways, they are noting mine through a clearer lens, and are probably taking my measure far better than I take theirs. One instinctively shrinks from making a sketch or memorandum while they are by; and if caught in

the act, one fondly hopes to pass for some harmless speculator in real estate, whose pencillings may be only a matter of habit, like those casual sums in compound interest which are usually to be found scrawled on the margins of the daily papers in Boston reading-rooms.

Our wharves are almost all connected by intricate by-ways among the buildings; and one almost wishes to be a pirate or a smuggler, for the pleasure of eluding the officers of justice through such seductive paths. It is, perhaps, to counteract this perilous fascination that our new police-office has been established on a wharf. You will see its brick tower rising not ungracefully, as you enter the inner harbor; it looks the better for being almost windowless, though beauty was not the aim of the omission. A curious stranger is said to have asked one of our city fathers the reason of this peculiarity. "No use in windows," said the experienced official sadly; "the boys would only break 'em." It seems very unjust to assert that there is no subordination in our American society; the citizens show deference to the police, and the police to the boys.

The ancient aspect of these wharves extends itself sometimes to the vessels which lie moored beside them. At yonder pier, for instance, has lain for thirteen years a decaying bark, which was suspected of being engaged in the slave-trade. She was run ashore and abandoned on Block Island, in the winter of 1854, and was afterwards brought in here. Her purchaser was offered eight thousand dollars for his bargain, but refused it; and here the vessel has remained, paying annual wharf dues and charges, till she is worthless. She lies chained at the wharf, and the tide rises and falls within her, thus furnishing a convenient bathing-house for the children, who also find a perpetual gymnasium in the broken shrouds that dangle from her masts. Turner, when he painted his "slave-ship," could have asked no better model. There is no name upon the stern, and it exhibits merely a carved eagle, with the wings clipped and the head knocked off. Only the lower masts remain, which are of a dismal black, as are the tops and mizzen cross-trees. Within the bulwarks, on each

side, stand rows of black blocks, to which the shrouds were once attached; these blocks are called by sailors "dead-eyes," and each stands in weird mockery, with its three ominous holes, like so many human skulls before some palace in Dahomey. Other blocks like these swing more ominously yet at the ends of the shrouds, that still hang suspended, waving and creaking and jostling in the wind. Each year the ropes decay, and soon the repulsive pendants will be gone. Not so with the iron belaying-pins, a few of which still stand around the mast, so rusted into the iron fife-rail that even the persevering industry of the children cannot wrench them out. It seems as if some guilty stain must cling to their sides, and hold them in. By one of those fitnesses which fortune often adjusts, but which seem incredible in art, the wharf is now used on one side for the storage of slate, and the hulk is approached through an avenue of gravestones. I never find myself in that neighborhood but my steps instinctively seek that condemned vessel, whether by day, when she makes a dark foreground for the white yachts and the summer waves, or by night, when the storm breaks over her desolate deck.

If we follow northward from "Queen-Hithe" along the shore, we pass into a region where the ancient wharves of commerce, ruined in 1815, have never been rebuilt; and only slender pathways for pleasure voyagers now stretch above the submerged foundations. Once the court end of the town, then its commercial centre, it is now divided between the tenements of fishermen and the summer homes of city households. Still the great old houses remain, with mahogany stairways, carved wainscoting, and painted tiles; the sea has encroached upon their gardens, and only boats like mine approach where English dukes and French courtiers once landed. At the head of yonder private wharf, in that spacious and still cheerful abode, dwelt the beautiful Robinson sisterhood,—the three Quaker belles of Revolutionary days, the memory of whose loves might lend romance to this neighborhood forever. One of these maidens was asked in marriage by a captain in the English army, and was banished by her family to the Narragansett shore, under a flag of truce, to avoid him;

her lover was afterward killed by a cannon-ball, in his tent, and she died unwedded. Another was sought by two aspirants, who came in the same ship to woo her, the one from Philadelphia, the other from New York. She refused them both, and they sailed southward together; but, the wind proving adverse, they returned, and one lingered till he won her hand. Still another lover was forced into a vessel by his friends, to tear him from the enchanted neighborhood; while sailing past the house, he suddenly threw himself into the water,—it must have been about where the end of the wharf now rests,—that he might be rescued, and carried, a passive Leander, into yonder door. The house was first the head-quarters of the English commander, then of the French; and the sentinels of De Noailles once trod where now croquet-balls form the heaviest ordnance. Peaceful and untitled guests now throng in summer where St. Vincents and Northumberlands once rustled and glittered; and there is nothing to recall those brilliant days except the painted tiles on the chimney, where there is a choice society of coquettes and beaux, priests and conjurers, beggars and dancers, and every wig and hoop dates back to the days of Queen Anne.

Sometimes when I stand upon this pier by night, and look across the calm black water, so still, perhaps, that the starry reflections seem to drop through it in prolonged javelins of light instead of resting on the surface, and the opposite lighthouse spreads its cloth of gold across the bay,—I can imagine that I discern the French and English vessels just weighing anchor; I see De Lauzun and De Noailles embarking, and catch the last sheen upon their lace, the last glitter of their swords. It vanishes, and I see only the lighthouse gleam, and the dark masts of a sunken ship across the neighboring island. Those motionless spars have, after all, a nearer interest, and, as I saw them sink, I will tell their tale.

That vessel came in here one day last August, a stately, full-sailed bark; nor was it known, till she had anchored, that she was a mass of imprisoned fire below. She was the "Trajan," from Rockland, bound to New Orleans with a cargo of lime, which took fire in a gale of wind, being wet with sea-water as the vessel rolled. The captain

and crew retreated to the deck, and made the hatches fast, leaving even their clothing and provisions below. They remained on deck, after reaching this harbor, till the planks grew too hot beneath their feet, and the water came boiling from the pumps. Then the vessel was towed into a depth of five fathoms, to be scuttled and sunk. I watched her go down. Early impressions from "Peter Parley" had portrayed the sinking of a vessel as a frightful plunge, endangering all around, like a maelstrom. The actual process was merely a subsidence so calm and gentle that a child might have stood upon the deck till it sank beneath him, and then might have floated away. Instead of a convulsion, it was something stately and very pathetic to the imagination. The bark remained almost level, the bows a little higher than the stern; and her breath appeared to be surrendered in a series of pulsations, as if every gasp of the lungs admitted more of the suffocating wave. After each long heave, she went visibly a few inches deeper, and then paused. The face of the benign Emperor, her namesake, was on the stern; first sank the carven beard, then the rather mutilated nose, then the white and staring eyes, that gazed blankly over the engulfing waves. The figure-head was Trajan again, at full length, with the costume of an Indian hunter, and the face of a Roman sage; this image lingered longer, and then vanished, like Victor Hugo's Gilliatt, by cruel gradations. Meanwhile the gilded name upon the taffrail had slowly disappeared also; but even when the ripples began to meet across her deck, still her descent was calm. As the water gained, the hidden fire was extinguished, and the smoke, at first densely rising, grew rapidly less. Yet when it had stopped altogether, and all but the top of the cabin had disappeared, there came a new ebullition of steam, like a hot spring, throwing itself several feet in air, and then ceasing.

As the vessel went down, several beams and planks came springing endwise up the hatchway, like liberated men. But nothing had a stranger look to me than some great black casks which had been left on deck. These, as the water floated them, seemed to stir and wake, and to become gifted with life, and then got into motion and

wallowed heavily about, like hippopotami or any unwieldy and bewildered beasts. At last the most enterprising of them slid somehow to the bulwark, and, after several clumsy efforts, shouldered itself over; then others bounced out, eagerly following, as sheep leap a wall, and then they all went bobbing away, over the dancing waves. For the wind blew fresh meanwhile, and there were some twenty sail-boats lying-to with reefed sails by the wreck, like so many sea-birds; and when the loose stuff began to be washed from the deck, they all took wing at once, to save whatever could be picked up,—since at such times, as at a conflagration on land, every little thing seems to assume a value,—and at last one young fellow steered boldly up to the sinking ship itself, sprang upon the vanishing taffrail for one instant, as if resolved to be the last on board, and then pushed off again. I never saw anything seem so extinguished out of the universe as that great vessel, which had towered so colossal above my little boat; it was impossible to imagine that she was all there yet, beneath the foaming and indifferent waves. No effort has yet been made to raise her; and a dead eagle seems to have more in common with the living bird than has now this submerged and decaying hulk with the white and winged creature that came sailing into our harbor on that summer day.

It shows what conversational resources are always at hand in a seaport town, that the boatman with whom I first happened to visit this burning vessel had been thrice at sea on ships similarly destroyed, and could give all the particulars of their fate. I know no class of uneducated men whose talk is so apt to be worth hearing as that of sailors. Even apart from their personal adventures and their glimpses at foreign lands, they have made observations of nature which are far more careful and minute than those of farmers, because the very lives of sailors are always at risk. Their voyages have also made them sociable and fond of talk, while the pursuits of most men tend to make them silent; and their constant changes of scene, though not touching them very deeply, have really given a certain enlargement to their minds. A quiet demeanor in a seaport town proves nothing; the most inconspicuous man may

have the most thrilling career to look back upon. With what a superb familiarity do these men treat this habitable globe! Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope are in their phrase but the West Cape and the East Cape, merely two familiar portals of their wonted home. With what undisguised contempt they speak of the enthusiasm displayed over the ocean yacht-race! That any man should boast of crossing the Atlantic in a schooner of two hundred tons, in presence of those who have more than once reached the Indian Ocean in a fishing-smack of fifty, and have beaten in the homeward race the ships in whose company they sailed! It is not many years since there was here a fishing-skipper, whose surname was "Daredevil," and who sailed from this port to all parts of the world, on sealing voyages, in a sloop so small that she was popularly said to go under water when she got outside the lights, and never to reappear until she reached her port.

And not only those who sail on long voyages, but even our local pilots and fishermen, still lead an adventurous and untamed life, less softened than any other by the appliances of modern days. In their undecked boats they hover day and night along these stormy coasts, and at any hour the beating of the long-roll upon the beach may call their full manhood into action. Cowardice is sifted and crushed out from among them by a pressure so constant; and they are withal truthful and steady in their ways, with few vices and many virtues. They are born poor, and remain poor, for their work is hard, with more blanks than prizes; but their life is a life for a man, and though it makes them prematurely old, yet their old age comes peacefully and well. In almost all pursuits the advance of years brings something forlorn. It is not merely that the body decays, but that men grow isolated and are pushed aside; there is no common interest between age and youth. The old farmer leads a lonely existence, and ceases to meet his compeers except on Sunday; nobody consults him; his experience has been monotonous, and his age is apt to grow unsocial. The old mechanic finds his tools and his methods superseded by those of younger men. But the superannuated fisherman graduates into an oracle; the longer he lives, the greater

the dignity of his experience; he remembers the great storm, the great tide, the great catch, the great shipwreck; and on all emergencies his counsel has weight. He still busies himself about the boats too, and still sails on sunny days to show the youngsters the best fishing-ground. When too infirm for even this, he can at least sun himself beside the landing, and, dreaming over inexhaustible memories, watch the bark of his own life go down.

THE HAUNTED WINDOW.

It was always a mystery to me where Severance got precisely his combination of qualities. His father was simply what is called a handsome man, with stately figure and curly black hair, not without a certain dignity of manner, but with a face so shallow that it did not even seem to ripple, and with a voice so prosy that, when he spoke of the sky, you wished there were no such thing. His mother was a fair, little, pallid creature,—wash-blond, as they say of lace,—patient, meek, and always fatigued and fatiguing. But Severance, as I first knew him, was the soul of activity. He had dark eyes, that had a great deal of light in them, without corresponding depth; his hair was dark, straight, and very soft; his mouth expressed sweetness, without much strength; he talked well; and though he was apt to have a wandering look, as if his thoughts were laying a submarine cable to another continent, yet the young girls were always glad to have the semblance of conversation with him in this. To me he was in the last degree lovable. He had just enough of that subtile quality called genius, perhaps, to spoil first his companions, and then himself. His words had weight with you, though you might know yourself wiser; and if you went to give him the most reasonable advice, you were suddenly seized with a slight paralysis of the tongue. Thus it was, at any rate, with me. We were cemented therefore by the firmest ties,—a nominal seniority on my part, and a substantial supremacy on his.

We lodged one summer at an old house in that odd suburb of Oldport called "The Point." It is a sort of Artists' Quarter of the town, frequented by a class of summer visitors more addicted to sailing and sketching than to driving and bowing,—persons who do not object to simple fare, and can live, as one of them said, on potatoes and Point. Here Severance and I made our summer home, basking in the delicious sunshine of the lovely bay. The bare outlines around Oldport sometimes dismay the stranger, but soon fascinate. Nowhere does one feel bareness so little, because there is no sharpness of perspective; everything shimmers in the moist atmosphere; the islands are all glamour and mirage; and the undulating hills of the horizon seem each like the soft, arched back of some pet animal, and you long to caress them with your hand. At last your thoughts begin to swim also, and pass into vague fancies, which you also love to caress. Severance and I were constantly afloat, body and mind. He was a perfect sailor, and had that dreaminess in his nature which matches with nothing but the ripple of the waves. Still, I could not hide from myself that he was a changed man since that voyage in search of health from which he had just returned. His mother talked in her humdrum way about heart disease; and his father, taking up the strain, bored us about organic lesions, till we almost wished he had a lesion himself. Severance ridiculed all this; but he grew more and more moody, and his eyes seemed to be laying more submarine cables than ever.

When we were not on the water, we both liked to mouse about the queer streets and quaint old houses of that region, and to chat with the fishermen and their grandmothers. There was one house, however, which was very attractive to me,—perhaps because nobody lived in it, and which, for that or some other reason, he never would approach. It was a great square building of rough gray stone, looking like those sombre houses which everyone remembers in Montreal, but which are rare in "the States." It had been built many years before by some millionnaire from New Orleans, and was left unfinished, nobody knew why, till the garden was a wilderness of bloom, and the windows of ivy. Oldport is the only place in New

England where either ivy or traditions will grow; there were, to be sure, no legends about this house that I could hear of, for the ghosts in those parts were feeble-minded and retrospective by reason of age, and perhaps scorned a mansion where nobody had ever lived; but the ivy clustered round the projecting windows as densely as if it had the sins of a dozen generations to hide.

The house stood just above what were commonly called (from their slaty color) the Blue Rocks; it seemed the topmost pebble left by some tide that had receded,—which perhaps it was. Nurses and children thronged daily to these rocks, during the visitors' season, and the fishermen found there a favorite lounging-place; but nobody scaled the wall of the house save myself, and I went there very often. The gate was sometimes opened by Paul, the silent Bavarian gardener, who was master of the keys; and there were also certain great cats that were always sunning themselves on the steps, and seemed to have grown old and gray in waiting for mice that had never come. They looked as if they knew the past and the future. If the owl is the bird of Minerva, the cat should be her beast; they have the same sleepy air of unfathomable wisdom. There was such a quiet and potent spell about the place that one could almost fancy these constant animals to be the transformed bodies of human visitors who had stayed too long. Who knew what tales might be told by these tall, slender birches, clustering so closely by the sombre walls?—birches which were but whispering shrubs when the first gray stones were laid, and which now reared above the eaves their white stems and dark boughs, still whispering and waiting till a few more years should show them, across the roof, the topmost blossoms of other birches on the other side.

Before the great western doorway spread the outer harbor, whither the coasting vessels came to drop anchor at any approach of storm. These silent visitors, which arrived at dusk and went at dawn, and from which no boat landed, seemed fitting guests before the portals of the silent house. I was never tired of watching them from the piazza; but Severance always stayed outside the wall. It was a whim of his, he

said; and once only I got out of him something about the resemblance of the house to some Portuguese mansion,—at Madeira, perhaps, or at Rio Janeiro, but he did not say,—with which he had no pleasant associations. Yet he afterwards seemed to wish to deny this remark, or to confuse my impressions of it, which naturally fixed it the better in my mind.

I remember well the morning when he was at last coaxed into approaching the house. It was late in September, and a day of perfect calm. As we looked from the broad piazza, there was a glassy smoothness over all the bay, and the hills were coated with a film, or rather a mere varnish, inconceivably thin, of haze more delicate than any other climate in America can show. Over the water there were white gulls flying, lazy and low; schools of young mackerel displayed their white sides above the surface; and it seemed as if even a butterfly might be seen for miles over that calm expanse. The bay was covered with mackerel-boats, and one man sculled indolently across the foreground a scarlet skiff. It was so still that every white sail-boat rested where its sail was first spread; and though the tide was at half-ebb, the anchored boats swung idly different ways from their moorings. Yet there was a continuous ripple in the broad sail of some almost motionless schooner, and there was a constant melodious plash along the shore. From the mouth of the bay came up slowly the premonitory line of bluer water, and we knew that a breeze was near.

Severance seemed to rise in spirits as we approached the house, and I noticed no sign of shrinking, except an occasional lowering of the voice. Seeing this, I ventured to joke him a little on his previous reluctance, and he replied in the same strain. I seated myself at the corner, and began sketching old Fort Louis, while he strolled along the piazza, looking in at the large, vacant windows. As he approached the farther end, I suddenly heard him give a little cry of amazement or dismay, and, looking up, saw him leaning against the wall, with pale face and hands clenched.

A minute sometimes appears a long while; and though I sprang to him instantly, yet I remember that it seemed as if, during that instant, the whole face of things had changed. The breeze had come, the bay was rippled, the sail-boats careened to the wind, fishes and birds were gone, and a dark gray cloud had come between us and the sun. Such sudden changes are not, however, uncommon after an interval of calm; and my only conscious thought at the time was of wonder at the strange aspect of my companion.

"What was that?" asked Severance in a bewildered tone. I looked about me, equally puzzled. "Not there," he said. "In the window."

I looked in at the window, saw nothing, and said so. There was the great empty drawing-room, across which one could see the opposite window, and through this the eastern piazza and the garden beyond. Nothing more was there. With some persuasion, Severance was induced to look in. He admitted that he saw nothing peculiar; but he refused all explanation, and we went home.

"Never let me go to that house again," he said abruptly, as we entered our own door.

I pointed out to him the absurdity of thus yielding to a nervous delusion, which was already in part conquered, and he finally promised to revisit the scene with me the next day. To clear all possible misgivings from my own mind, I got the key of the house from Paul, explored it thoroughly, and was satisfied that no improper visitor had recently entered the drawing-room at least, as the windows were strongly bolted on the inside, and a large cobweb, heavy with dust, hung across the doorway. This did no great credit to Paul's stewardship, but was, perhaps, a slight relief to me. Nor could I see a trace of anything uncanny outside the house. When Severance went with me, next day, the coast was equally clear, and I was glad to have cured him so easily.

Unfortunately, it did not last. A few days after, there was a brilliant sunset, after a storm, with gorgeous yellow light slanting everywhere, and the sun looking at us

between bars of dark purple cloud, edged with gold where they touched the pale blue sky; all this fading at last into a great whirl of gray to the northward, with a cold purple ground. At the height of the show, I climbed the wall to my favorite piazza, and was surprised to find Severance already there.

He sat facing the sunset, but with his head sunk between his hands. At my approach, he looked up, and rose to his feet. "Do not deceive me any more," he said, almost savagely, and pointed to the window.

I looked in, and must confess that, for a moment, I too was startled. There was a perceptible moment of time during which it seemed as if no possible philosophy could explain what appeared in sight. Not that any object showed itself within the great drawing-room, but I distinctly saw—across the apartment, and through the opposite window—the dark figure of a man about my own size, who leaned against the long window, and gazed intently on me. Above him spread the yellow sunset light, around him the birch-boughs hung and the ivy-tendrils swayed, while behind him there appeared a glimmering water-surface, across which slowly drifted the tall masts of a schooner. It looked strangely like a view I had seen of some foreign harbor,—Amalfi, perhaps,—with a vine-clad balcony and a single human figure in the foreground. So real and startling was the sight that at first it was not easy to resolve the whole scene into its component parts. Yet it was simply such a confused mixture of real and reflected images as one often sees from the window of a railway carriage, where the mirrored interior seems to glide beside the train, with the natural landscape for a background. In this case, also, the frame and foliage of the picture were real, and all else was reflected; the sunlit bay behind us was reproduced as in a camera, and the dark figure was but the full-length image of myself.

It was easy to explain all this to Severance, but he shook his head. "So cool a philosopher as yourself," he said, "should remember that this image is not always visible. At our last visit, we looked for it in vain. When we first saw it, it appeared

and disappeared within ten minutes. On your mechanical theory it should be other-wise."

This staggered me for a moment. Then the ready solution occurred, that the reflection depended on the strength and direction of the light; and I proved to him that, in our case, it had appeared and disappeared with the sunshine. He was silenced, but evidently not convinced; yet time and common-sense, it seemed, would take care of that.

Soon after all this, I was called out of town for a week or two. If Severance would go with me, it would doubtless complete the cure, I thought; but this he obstinately declined. After my departure, my sister wrote, he seemed absolutely to haunt the empty house by the Blue Rocks. He undoubtedly went here to sketch, she thought. The house was in charge of a real-estate agent,—a retired landscape-painter, whose pictures did not sell so profitably as their originals; and her theory was, that this agent hoped to make our friend buy the place, and so allured him there under pretence of sketching. Moreover, she surmised, he was studying some effect of shadow, because, unlike most men, he appeared in decent spirits only on cloudy days. It is always so easy to fit a man out with a set of ready-made motives! But I drew my own conclusions, and was not surprised to hear, soon after, that Severance was seriously ill.

This brought me back at once,—sailing down from Providence in an open boat, I remember, one lovely moonlight night. Next day I saw Severance, who declared that he had suffered from nothing worse than a prolonged sick-headache. I soon got out of him all that had happened. He had seen the figure in the window every sunny day, he said. Of course he had, if he chose to look for it, and I could only smile, though it perhaps seemed unkind. But I stopped smiling when he went on to tell that, not satisfied with these observations, he had visited the house by moonlight also, and had then seen, as he averred, a second figure standing beside the first.

Of course, there was no defence against such a theory as this, except simply to laugh it down; but it made me very anxious, for it showed that he was growing thoroughly morbid. "Either it was pure fancy," I said, "or it was Paul the gardener."

But here he was prepared for me. It seemed that, on seeing the two figures, Severance had at once left the piazza, and, with an instinct of common-sense that was surprising, had crossed the garden, scaled the wall, and looked in at the window of Paul's little cottage, where the man and his wife were quietly seated at supper, probably after a late fishing-trip. "There was another reason," he said; but here he stopped, and would give no description of the second figure, which he had, however, seen twice again, always by moon-light. He consented to let me accompany him the following night.

We accordingly went. It was a calm, clear night, and the moon lay brightly on the bay. The distant shores looked low and filmy; a naval vessel was in the harbor, and there was a ball on board, with music and fire-works; some fishermen were singing in their boats, late as was the hour. Severance was absorbed in his own gloomy reveries; and when we had crossed the wall, the world seemed left outside, and the glamour of the place began to creep over me also. I seemed to see my companion relapsing into some phantom realm, beyond power of withdrawal. I talked, sang, whistled; but it was all a rather hollow effort, and soon ceased. The great house looked gloomy and impenetrable, the moonlight appeared sick and sad, the birch-boughs rustled in a dreary way. We went up the steps in no jubilant mood.

I crossed the piazza at once, looked in at the farthest window, and saw there my own image, though far more faintly than in the sunlight. Severance then joined me, and his reflected shape stood by mine. Something of the first ghostly impression was renewed, I must confess, by this meeting of the two shadows; there was something rather awful in the way the bodiless things nodded and gesticulated at each other in silence. Still, there was nothing more than this, as Severance was compelled to own;

and I was trying to turn the whole affair into ridicule, when suddenly, without sound or warning, I saw—as distinctly as I perceive the words I now write—yet another figure stand at the window, gaze steadfastly at us for a moment, and then disappear. It was, as I fancied, that of a woman, but was totally enveloped in a very full cloak, reaching to the ground, with a peculiarly cut hood, that stood erect and seemed half as long as the body of the garment. I had a vague recollection of having seen some such costume in a picture.

Of course, I dashed round the corner of the house, threaded the birch-trees, and stood on the eastern piazza. No one was there. Without losing an instant, I ran to the garden wall and climbed it, as Severance had done, to look into Paul's cottage. That worthy was just getting into bed, in a state of complicated deshabille, his blackbearded head wrapped in an old scarlet handkerchief that made him look like a retired pirate in reduced circumstances. He being accounted for, I vainly traversed the shrubberies, returned to the western piazza, watched awhile uselessly, and went home with Severance, a good deal puzzled.

By daylight the whole thing seemed different. That I had seen the figure there was no doubt. It was not a reflected image, for we had no companion. It was, then, human. After all, thought I, it is a commonplace thing enough, this masquerading in a cloak and hood. Someone has observed Severance's nocturnal visits, and is amusing himself at his expense. The peculiarity was, that the thing was so well done, and the figure had such an air of dignity, that somehow it was not so easy to make light of it in talking with him.

I went into his room, next day. His sick-headache, or whatever it was, had come on again, and he was lying on his bed. Rutherford's strange old book on the Second Sight lay open before him. "Look there," he said; and I read the motto of a chapter:—

"In sunlight one, In shadow none, In moonlight two, In thunder two, Then comes

Death."

I threw the book indignantly from me, and began to invent doggerel, parodying this precious incantation. But Severance did not seem to enjoy the joke, and it grows tiresome to enact one's own farce and do one's own applauding.

For several days after he was laid up in earnest; but instead of getting any mental rest from this, he lay poring over that preposterous book, and it really seemed as if his brain were a little disturbed. Meanwhile I watched the great house, day and night, sought for footsteps, and, by some odd fancy, took frequent observations on the gardener and his wife. Failing to get any clew, I waited one day for Paul's absence, and made a call upon the wife, under pretence of hunting up a missing handkerchief,—for she had been my laundress. I found the handsome, swarthy creature, with her six bronzed children around her, training up the Madeira vine that made a bower of the whole side of her little, black, gambrel-roofed cottage. On learning my errand, she became full of sympathy, and was soon emptying her bureau-drawers in pursuit of the lost handkerchief. As she opened the lowest drawer, I saw within it something which sent all the blood to my face for a moment. It was a black cloth cloak, with a stiff hood two feet long, of precisely the pattern worn by the unaccountable visitant at the window. I turned almost fiercely upon her; but she looked so innocent as she stood there, caressing and dusting with her fingers what was evidently a pet garment, that it was really impossible to denounce her.

"Is that a Bavarian cloak?" said I, trying to be cool and judicial.

Here broke in the eldest boy, named John, aged ten, a native American, and a sailor already, whom I had twice fished up from a capsized punt. "Mother ain't a Bavarian," quoth the young salt. "Father's a Bavarian; mother's a Portegee. Portegees wear them hoods."

"I am a Portuguese, sir, from Fayal," said the woman, prolonging with sweet intonation the soft name of her birthplace. "This is my capote, she added, taking up

with pride the uncouth costume, while the children gathered round, as if its vast folds came rarely into sight.

"It has not been unfolded for a year," she said. As she spoke, she dropped it with a cry, and a little mouse sprang from the skirts, and whisked away into some corner. We found that the little animal had made its abode in the heavy woollen, of which three or four thicknesses had been eaten through, and then matted together into the softest of nests. This contained, moreover, a small family of mouselets, who certainly had not taken part in any midnight masquerade. The secret seemed more remote than ever, for I knew that there was no other Portuguese family in the town, and there was no confounding this peculiar local costume with any other.

Returning to Severance's chamber, I said nothing of all this. He was, by an odd coincidence, looking over a portfolio of Fayal sketches made by himself during his late voyage. Among them were a dozen studies of just such capotes as I had seen,—some in profile, completely screening the wearer, others disclosing women's faces, old or young. He seemed to wish to put them away, however, when I came in. Really, the plot seemed to thicken; and it was a little provoking to understand it no better, when all the materials seemed close to one's hands.

A day or two later, I was summoned to Boston. Returning thence by the stage-coach, we drove from Tiverton, the whole length of the island, under one of those wild and wonderful skies which give, better than anything in nature, the effect of a field of battle. The heavens were filled with ten thousand separate masses of cloud, varying in shade from palest gray to iron-black, borne rapidly to and fro by upper and lower currents of opposing wind. They seemed to be charging, retreating, breaking, recombining, with puffs of what seemed smoke, and a few wan sunbeams sometimes striking through for fire. Wherever the eye turned, there appeared some flying fragment not seen before; and yet in an hour this noiseless Antietam grew still, and a settled leaden film overspread the sky, yielding only to some level lines

of light where the sun went down. Perhaps our driver was looking toward the sky more than to his own affairs, for, just as all this ended a wheel gave out, and we had to stop in Portsmouth for repairs. By the time we were again in motion, the changing wind had brought up a final thunder-storm, which broke upon us ere we reached our homes. It was rather an uncommon thing, so late in the season; for the lightning, like other brilliant visitors, usually appears in Oldport during only a month or two of every year.

The coach set me down at my own door, so soaked that I might have floated in. I peeped into Severance's room, however, on the way to my own. Strange to say, no one was there; yet some one had evidently been lying on the bed, and on the pillow lay the old book on the Second Sight, open at the very page which had so bewitched him and vexed me. I glanced at it mechanically, and when I came to the meaningless jumble, "In thunder two," a flash flooded the chamber, and a sudden fear struck into my mind. Who knew what insane experiment might have come into that boy's head?

With sudden impulse, I went downstairs, and found the whole house empty, until a stupid old woman, coming in from the wood-house with her apron full of turnips, told me that Severance had been missing since nightfall, after being for a week in bed, dangerously ill, and sometimes slightly delirious. The family had become alarmed, and were out with lanterns, in search of him.

It was safe to say that none of them had more reason to be alarmed than I. It was something, however, to know where to seek him. Meeting two neighboring fishermen, I took them with me. As we approached the well-known wall, the blast blew out our lights, and we could scarcely speak. The lightning had grown less frequent, yet sheets of flame seemed occasionally to break over the dark, square sides of the house, and to send a flickering flame along the ridge-pole and eaves, like a surf of light. A surf of water broke also behind us on the Blue Rocks, sounding as if it pursued our very footsteps; and one of the men whispered hoarsely

to me, that a Nantucket brig had parted her cable, and was drifting in shore.

As we entered the garden, lights gleamed in the shrubbery. To my surprise, it was Paul and his wife, with their two oldest children,—these last being quite delighted with the stir, and showing so much illumination, in the lee of the house, that it was quite a Feast of Lanterns. They seemed a little surprised at meeting us, too; but we might as well have talked from Point Judith to Beaver Tail as to have attempted conversation there. I walked round the building; but a flash of lightning showed nothing on the western piazza save a birch-tree, which lay across, blown down by the storm. I therefore went inside, with Paul's household, leaving the fishermen without.

Never shall I forget that search. As we went from empty room to room, the thunder seemed rolling on the very roof, and the sharp flashes of lightning appeared to put out our lamps and then kindle them again. We traversed the upper regions, mounting by a ladder to the attic; then descended into the cellar and the wine-vault. The thorough bareness of the house, the fact that no bright-eyed mice peeped at us from their holes, no uncouth insects glided on the walls, no flies buzzed in the unwonted lamplight, scarcely a spider slid down his damp and trailing web,—all this seemed to enhance the mystery. The vacancy was more dreary than desertion: it was something old which had never been young. We found ourselves speaking in whispers; the children kept close to their parents; we seemed to be chasing some awful Silence from room to room; and the last apartment, the great drawing-room, we really seemed loath to enter. The less the rest of the house had to show, the more, it seemed, must be concentrated there. Even as we entered, a blast of air from a broken pane extinguished our last light, and it seemed to take many minutes to rekindle it.

As it shone once more, a brilliant lightning-flash also swept through the window, and flickered and flickered, as if it would never have done. The eldest child

suddenly screamed, and pointed with her finger, first to one great window and then to its opposite. My eyes instinctively followed the successive directions; and the double glance gave me all I came to seek, and more than all. Outside the western window lay Severance, his white face against the pane, his eyes gazing across and past us,—struck down doubtless by the fallen tree, which lay across the piazza, and hid him from external view. Opposite him, and seen through the eastern window, stood, statue-like, the hooded figure, but with the great capote thrown back, showing a sad, eager, girlish face, with dark eyes, and a good deal of black hair,—one of those faces of peasant beauty such as America never shows,—faces where ignorance is almost raised into refinement by its childlike look. Contrasted with Severance's wild gaze, the countenance wore an expression of pitying forgiveness, almost of calm; yet it told of wasting sorrow and the wreck of a life. Gleaming lustrous beneath the lightning, it had a more mystic look when the long flash had ceased, and the single lantern burned beneath it, like an altar-lamp before a shrine.

"It is Aunt Emilia," exclaimed the little girl; and as she spoke, the father, turning angrily upon her, dashed the light to the ground, and groped his way out without a word of answer. I was too much alarmed about Severance to care for aught else, and quickly made my way to the western piazza, where I found him stunned by the fallen tree,—injured, I feared, internally,—still conscious, but unable to speak.

With the aid of my two companions I got him home, and he was ill for several weeks before he died. During his illness he told me all he had to tell; and though Paul and his family disappeared next day,—perhaps going on board the Nantucket brig, which had narrowly escaped shipwreck,—I afterwards learned all the remaining facts from the only neighbor in whom they had placed confidence. Severance, while convalescing at a country-house in Fayal, had fallen passionately in love with a young peasant-girl, who had broken off her intended marriage for love of him, and had sunk into a half-imbecile melancholy when deserted. She had afterwards come to this country, and joined her sister, Paul's wife. Paul had received

her reluctantly, and only on condition that her existence should be concealed. This was the easier, as it was one of her whims to go out only by night, when she had haunted the great house, which, she said, reminded her of her own island, so that she liked to wear thither the capote which had been the pride of her heart at home. On the few occasions when she had caught a glimpse of Severance, he had seemed to her, no doubt, as much a phantom as she seemed to him. On the night of the storm, they had both sought their favorite haunt, unconscious of each other, and the friends of each had followed in alarm.

I got traces of the family afterwards at Nantucket and later at Narragansett, and had reason to think that Paul was employed, one summer, by a farmer on Conanicut; but I was always just too late for them; and the money which Severance left, as his only reparation for poor Emilia, never was paid. The affair was hushed up, and very few, even among the neighbors, knew the tragedy that had passed by them with the storm.

After Severance died, I had that temporary feeling of weakened life which remains after the first friend or the first love passes, and the heart seems to lose its sense of infinity. His father came, and prosed, and measured the windows of the empty house, and calculated angles of reflection, and poured even death and despair into his crucible of commonplace; the mother whined in her feebler way at home; while the only brother, a talkative medical student, tried to pooh-pooh it all, and sent me a letter demonstrating that Emilia was never in America, and that the whole was an hallucination. I cared nothing for his theory; it all seemed like a dream to me, and, as all the actors but myself are gone, it seems so still. The great house is yet unoccupied, and likely to remain so; and he who looks through its western window may still be startled by the weird image of himself. As I lingered round it, to-day, beneath the winter sunlight, the snow drifted pitilessly past its ivied windows, and so hushed my footsteps that I scarce knew which was the phantom, myself or my reflection, and wondered if the medical student would not argue me out of existence

next.

This is the end of my story. If I sought for a moral, it would be hard to attach one to a thing so slight. It could only be this, that shadow and substance are always ready to link themselves, in unexpected ways, against the diseased imagination; and that remorse can make the most transparent crystal into a mirror for its sin.

A DRIFT-WOOD FIRE.

"This ae nighte, this ae nighte, Every nighte and alle, Fire and salt and candle-lighte, And Christe receive thy saule." A Lyke-Wake Dirge.

The October days grow rapidly shorter, and brighten with more concentrated light. It is but half past five, yet the sun dips redly behind Conanicut, the sunset-gun booms from our neighbor's yacht, the flag glides down from his mainmast, and the slender pennant, running swiftly up the opposite halyards, dances and flickers like a flame, and at last perches, with dainty hesitation, at the mast-head. A tint of salmon-color, burnished into long undulations of lustre, overspreads the shallower waves; but a sober gray begins to steal in beneath the sunset rays, and will soon claim even the brilliant foreground for its own. Pile a few more fragments of drift-wood upon the fire in the great chimney, little maiden, and then couch yourself before it, that I may have your glowing childhood as a foreground for those heaped relics of shipwreck and despair. You seem, in your scarlet boating-dress, Annie, like some bright tropic bird, alit for a moment beside that other bird of the tropics, flame.

Thoreau thought that his temperament dated from an earlier period than the agricultural, because he preferred woodcraft to gardening; and it is also pleasant to revert to the period when men had invented neither saws nor axes, but simply picked up their fuel in forests or on ocean-shores. Fire is a thing which comes so near us, and combines itself so closely with our life, that we enjoy it best when we work for it in some way, so that our fuel shall warm us twice, as the country people

say,—once in the getting, and again in the burning. Yet no work seems to have more of the flavor of play in it than that of collecting drift-wood on some convenient beach, or than this boat-service of ours, Annie, when we go wandering from island to island in the harbor, and glide over sea-weedgroves and the habitations of crabs,—or to the flowery and ruined bastions of Rose Island,—or to those caves at Coaster's Harbor where we played Victor Hugo, and were eaten up in fancy by a cuttle-fish. Then we voyaged, you remember, to that further cave in, the solid rock, just above low-water-mark, a cell unapproachable by land, and high enough for you to stand erect. There you wished to play Constance in Marmion, and to be walled up alive, if convenient; but as it proved impracticable on that day, you helped me to secure some bits of drift-wood instead. Longer voyages brought waifs from remoter islands,—whose very names tell, perchance, the changing story of mariners long since wrecked,—isles baptized Patience and Prudence, Hope and Despair. And other relics bear witness of more distant beaches, and of those wrecks which still lie, sentinels of ruin, along Brenton's Point and Castle Hill.

To collect drift-wood is like botanizing, and one soon learns to recognize the prevailing species, and to look with pleased eagerness for new. It is a tragic botany indeed, where, as in enchanted gardens, every specimen has a voice, and, as you take each from the ground, you expect from it a cry like the mandrake's. And from what a garden it comes! As one walks round Brenton's Point after an autumnal storm, it seems as if the passionate heaving of the waves had brought wholly new tints to the surface, hues unseen even in dreams before, greens and purples impossible in serener days. These match the prevailing green and purple of the slate-cliffs; and Nature in truth carries such fine fitnesses yet further. For, as we tread the delicate seaside turf, which makes the farthest point seem merely the land's last bequest of emerald to the ocean, we suddenly come upon curved lines of lustrous purple amid the grass, rows on rows of bright muscle-shells, regularly traced as if a child had played there,—the graceful high-water-mark of the terrible

storm.

It is the crowning fascination of the sea, the consummation of such might in such infantine delicacy. You may notice it again in the summer, when our bay is thronged for miles on miles with inch-long jelly-fishes,—lovely creatures, in shape like disembodied gooseberries, and shot through and through in the sunlight with all manner of blue and golden glistenings, and bearing tiny rows of fringing oars that tremble like a baby's eyelids. There is less of gross substance in them than in any other created thing,—mere water and outline, destined to perish at a touch, but seemingly never touching, for they float secure, finding no conceivable cradle so soft as this awful sea. They are like melodies amid Beethoven's Symphonies, or like the songs that wander through Shakespeare, and that seem things too fragile to risk near Cleopatra's passion and Hamlet's woe. Thus tender is the touch of ocean; and look, how around this piece of oaken timber, twisted and torn and furrowed,—its iron bolts snapped across as if bitten,—there is yet twined a gay garland of ribbon-weed, bearing on its trailing stem a cluster of bright shells, like a mermaid's chatelaine.

Thus adorned, we place it on the blaze. As night gathers without, the gale rises. It is a season of uneasy winds, and of strange, rainless storms, which perplex the fishermen, and indicate rough weather out at sea. As the house trembles and the windows rattle, we turn towards the fire with a feeling of safety. Representing the fiercest of all dangers, it yet expresses security and comfort.

Should a gale tear the roof from over our heads and show the black sky alone above us, we should not feel utterly homeless while this fire burned,—at least I can recall such a feeling of protection when once left suddenly roofless by night in one of the wild gorges of Mount Katahdin. There is a positive demonstrative force in an open fire, which makes it your fit ally in a storm. Settled and obdurate cold may well be encountered by the quiet heat of an invisible furnace. But this howling wind might

depress one's spirits, were it not met by a force as palpable,—the warm blast within answering to the cold blast without. The wide chimney then becomes the scene of contest: wind meets wind, sparks encounter rain-drops, they fight in the air like the visioned soldiers of Attila; sometimes a daring drop penetrates, and dies, hissing, on the hearth; and sometimes a troop of sparks may make a sortie from the chimney-top. I know not how else we can meet the elements by a defiance so magnificent as that from this open hearth; and in burning drift-wood, especially, we turn against the enemy his own ammunition. For on these fragments three elements have already done their work. Water racked and strained the hapless ships, air hunted them, and they were thrown at last upon earth, the sternest of all. Now fire takes the shattered remnants, and makes them a means of comfort and defence.

It has been pointed out by botanists, as one of Nature's most graceful retributions, that, in the building of the ship, the apparent balance of vegetable forces is reversed, and the herb becomes master of the tree, when the delicate, blue-eyed flax, taking the stately pine under its protection, stretches over it in cordage, or spreads in sails. But more graceful still is this further contest between the great natural elements, when this most fantastic and vanishing thing, this delicate and dancing flame, subdues all these huge vassals to its will, and, after earth and air and water have done their utmost, comes in to complete the task, and to be crowned as monarch. "The sea drinks the air," said Anacreon, "and the sun the sea." My fire is the child of the sun.

I come back from every evening stroll to this gleaming blaze; it is a domestic lamp, and shines for me everywhere. To my imagination it burns as a central flame among these dark houses, and lights up the whole of this little fishing hamlet, humble suburb of the fashionable watering-place. I fancy that others too perceive the light, and that certain huge visitors are attracted, even when the storm keeps neighbors and friends at home. For the slightest presage of foul weather is sure to bring to yonder anchorage a dozen silent vessels, that glide up the harbor for refuge, and are heard

but once, when the chain-cable rattles as it runs out, and the iron hand of the anchor grasps the rock. It always seems to me that these unwieldy creatures are gathered, not about the neighboring lighthouse only, but around our ingle-side. Welcome, ye great winged strangers, whose very names are unknown! This hearth is comprehensive in its hospitalities; it will accept from you either its fuel or its guests; your mariners may warm themselves beside it, or your scattered timbers may warm me. Strange instincts might be supposed to thrill and shudder in the ribs of ships that sail toward the beacon of a drift-wood fire. Morituri salutant. A single shock, and all that magnificent fabric may become mere fuel to prolong the flame.

Here, beside the roaring ocean, this blaze represents the only receptacle more vast than ocean. We say, "unstable as water." But there is nothing unstable about the flickering flame; it is persistent and desperate, relentless in following its ends. It is the most tremendous physical force that man can use. "If drugs fail," said Hippocrates, "use the knife; should the knife fail, use fire." Conquered countries were anciently given over to fire and sword: the latter could only kill, but the other could annihilate. See how thoroughly it does its work, even when domesticated: it takes up everything upon the hearth and leaves all clean. The Greek proverb says, that "the sea drinks up all the sins of the world." Save fire only, the sea is the most capacious of all things.

But its task is left incomplete: it only hides its records, while fire destroys them. In the Norse Edda, when the gods try their games, they find themselves able to out-drink the ocean, but not to eat like the flame. Logi, or fire, licks up food and trencher and all. This chimney is more voracious than the sea. Give time enough, and all which yonder depths contain might pass through this insatiable throat, leaving only a few ashes and the memory of a flickering shade,—pulvis et umbra. We recognize this when we have anything to conceal. Deep crimes are buried in earth, deeper are sunk In water, but the deepest of all are confided by trembling men to the profounder secrecy of flame. If every old chimney could narrate the fearful

deeds whose last records it has cancelled, what sighs of undying passion would breathe from its dark summit,—what groans of guilt! Those lurid sparks that whirl over yonder house-top, tossed aloft as if fire itself could not contain them, may be the last embers of some written scroll, one rescued word of which might suffice for the ruin of a household, and the crushing of many hearts.

But this domestic hearth of ours holds only, besides its drift-wood, the peaceful records of the day,—its shreds and fragments and fallen leaves. As the ancients poured wine upon their flames, so I pour rose-leaves in libation; and each morning contributes the faded petals of yesterday's wreaths. All our roses of this season have passed up this chimney in the blaze. Their delicate veins were filled with all the summer's fire, and they returned to fire once more,—ashes to ashes, flame to flame. For holding, with Bettina, that every flower which is broken becomes immortal in the sacrifice, I deem it more fitting that their earthly part should die by a concentration of that burning element which would at any rate be in some form their ending; so they have their altar on this bright hearth.

Let us pile up the fire anew with drift-wood, Annie. We can choose at random; for our logs came from no single forest. It is considered an important branch of skill in the country to know the varieties of firewood, and to choose among them well. But to-night we have the whole Atlantic shore for our wood-pile, and the Gulf Stream for a teamster. Every foreign tree of rarest name may, for aught we know, send its treasures to our hearth. Logwood and satinwood may mingle with cedar and maple; the old cellar floors of this once princely town are of mahogany, and why not our fire? I have a very indistinct impression what teak is; but if it means something black and impenetrable and nearly indestructible, then there is a piece of it, Annie, on the hearth at this moment.

It must be owned, indeed, that timbers soaked long enough in salt-water seem almost to lose their capacity of being burnt. Perhaps it was for this reason that, in the

ancient "lyke-wakes" of the North of England, a pinch of salt was placed upon the dead body, as a safeguard against purgatorial flames. Yet salt melts ice, and so represents heat, one would think; and one can fancy that these fragments should be doubly inflammable, by their saline quality, and by the unmerciful rubbing which the waves have given them. I have noticed what warmth this churning process communicates to the clotted foam that lies in tremulous masses among the rocks, holding all the blue of ocean in its bubbles. After one's hands are chilled with the water, one can warm them in the foam. These drift-wood fragments are but the larger foam of shipwrecks.

What strange comrades this flame brings together! As foreign sailors from remotest seas may sit and chat side by side, before some boarding-house fire in this seaport town, so these shapeless sticks, perhaps gathered from far wider wanderings, now nestle together against the backlog, and converse in strange dialects as they burn. It is written in the Heetopades of Veeshnoo Sarma, that, "as two planks, floating on the surface of the mighty receptacle of the waters, meet, and having met are separated forever, so do beings in this life come together and presently are parted." Perchance this chimney reunites the planks, at the last moment, as death must reunite friends.

And with what wondrous voices these strayed wanderers talk to one another on the hearth! They bewitch us by the mere fascination of their language. Such a delicacy of intonation, yet such a volume of sound. The murmur of the surf is not so soft or so solemn. There are the merest hints and traceries of tones,—phantom voices, more remote from noise than anything which is noise; and yet there is an undertone of roar, as from a thousand cities, the cities whence these wild voyagers came. Watch the decreasing sounds of a fire as it dies,—for it seems cruel to leave it, as we do, to die alone. I watched beside this hearth last night. As the fire sank down, the little voices grew stiller and more still, and at last there came only irregular beats, at varying intervals, as if from a heart that acted spasmodically, or as if it were measuring off by ticks the little remnant of time. Then it said, "Hush!" two or three

times, and there came something so like a sob that it seemed human; and then all was still.

If these dying voices are so sweet and subtile, what legends must be held untold by yonder fragments that lie unconsumed! Photography has familiarized us with the thought that every visible act, since the beginning of the world, has stamped itself upon surrounding surfaces, even if we have not yet skill to discern and hold the image. And especially, in looking on a liquid expanse, such as the ocean in calm, one is haunted with these fancies. I gaze into its depths, and wonder if no stray reflection has been imprisoned there, still accessible to human eyes, of some scene of passion or despair it has witnessed; as some maiden visitor at Holyrood Palace, looking in the ancient metallic mirror, might start at the thought that perchance some lineament of Mary Stuart may suddenly look out, in desolate and forgotten beauty, mingled with her own. And if the mere waters of the ocean, satiate and wearied with tragedy as they must be, still keep for our fancy such records, how much more might we attribute a human consciousness to these shattered fragments, each seared by its own special grief.

Yet while they are silent, I like to trace back for these component parts of my fire such brief histories as I share. This block, for instance, came from the large schooner which now lies at the end of Castle Hill Beach, bearing still aloft its broken masts and shattered rigging, and with its keel yet stanch, except that the stern-post is gone,—so that each tide sweeps in its green harvest of glossy kelp, and then tosses it in the hold like hay, desolately tenanting the place which once sheltered men. The floating weed, so graceful in its own place, looks but dreary when thus confined. On that fearfully cold Monday of last winter (January 8, 1866) when the mercury stood at -10 deg.; even in this mildest corner of New England,—this vessel was caught helplessly amid the ice that drifted out of the west passage of Narragansett Bay, before the fierce north-wind. They tried to beat into the eastern entrance, but the schooner seemed in sinking condition, the sails and helm were clogged with ice, and

every rope, as an eye-witness told me, was as large as a man's body with frozen sleet. Twice they tacked across, making no progress; and then, to save their lives, ran the vessel on the rocks and got ashore. After they had left her, a higher wave swept her off, and drifted her into a little cove, where she has ever since remained.

There were twelve wrecks along this shore last winter,—more than during any season for a quarter of a century. I remember when the first of these lay in great fragments on Graves Point, a schooner having been stranded on Cormorant Rocks outside, and there broken in pieces by the surf. She had been split lengthwise, and one great side was leaning up against the sloping rock, bows on, like some wild sea-creature never before beheld of men, and come there but to die. So strong was this impression that when I afterwards saw men at work upon the wreck, tearing out the iron bolts and chains, it seemed like torturing the last moments of a living thing. At my next visit there was no person in sight; another companion fragment had floated ashore, and the two lay peacefully beside the sailors' graves (which give the name to the point), as if they found comfort there. A little farther on there was a brig ashore and deserted. A fog came in from the sea; and, as I sat by the graves, some unseen passing vessel struck eight bells for noon. For a moment I fancied that it came from the empty brig,—a ghostly call, to summon phantom sailors.

That smouldering brand, which has alternately gleamed and darkened for so many minutes, I brought from Price's Neck last winter, when the Brenton's Reef Light-ship went ashore. Yonder the oddly shaped vessel rides at anchor now, two miles from land, bearing her lanterns aloft at fore and main top. She parted her moorings by night, in the fearful storm of October 19, 1865; and I well remember, that, as I walked through the streets that wild evening, it seemed dangerous to be out of doors, and I tried to imagine what was going on at sea, while at that very moment the light-ship was driving on toward me in the darkness. It was thus that it happened:—

There had been a heavy gale from the southeast, which, after a few hours of lull,

suddenly changed in the afternoon to the southwest, which is, on this coast, the prevailing direction. Beginning about three o'clock, this new wind had risen almost to a hurricane by six, and held with equal fury till midnight, after which it greatly diminished, though, when I visited the wreck next morning, it was hard to walk against the blast. The light-ship went adrift at eight in the evening; the men let go another anchor, with forty fathoms of cable; this parted also, but the cable dragged, as she drifted in, keeping the vessel's head to the wind, which was greatly to her advantage. The great waves took her over five lines of reef, on each of which her keel grazed or held for a time. She came ashore on Price's Neck at last, about eleven.

It was utterly dark; the sea broke high over the ship, even over her lanterns, and the crew could only guess that they were near the land by the sound of the surf. The captain was not on board, and the mate was in command, though his leg had been broken while holding the tiller. They could not hear each other's voices, and could scarcely cling to the deck. There seemed every chance that the ship would go to pieces before daylight. At last one of the crew, named William Martin, a Scotchman, thinking, as he afterwards told me, of his wife and three children, and of the others on board who had families,—and that something must be done, and he might as well do it as anybody,—got a rope bound around his waist, and sprang overboard. I asked the mate next day whether he ordered Martin to do this, and he said, "No, he volunteered it. I would not have ordered him, for I would not have done it myself." What made the thing most remarkable was, that the man actually could not swim, and did not know how far off the shore was, but trusted to the waves to take him thither,—perhaps two hundred yards. His trust was repaid. Struggling in the mighty surf, he sometimes felt the rocks beneath his feet, sometimes bruised his hands against them. At any rate he got on shore alive, and, securing his rope, made his way over the moors to the town, and summoned his captain, who was asleep in his own house. They returned at once to the spot, found the line still fast, and the rest of the crew, four in number, lowered the whaleboat, and were pulled to shore by the rope,

landing safely before daybreak.

When I saw the vessel next morning, she lay in a little cove, stern on, not wholly out of water,—steady and upright as in a dry-dock, with no sign of serious injury, except that the rudder was gone. She did not seem like a wreck; the men were the wrecks. As they lay among the rocks, bare or tattered, scarcely able to move, waiting for low tide to go on board the vessel, it was like a scene after a battle. They appeared too inert, poor fellows, to do anything but yearn toward the sun. When they changed position for shelter, from time to time, they crept along the rocks, instead of walking. They were like the little floating sprays of sea-weed, when you take them from the water and they become a mere mass of pulp in your hand. Martin shared in the general exhaustion, and no wonder; but he told his story very simply, and showed me where he had landed. The feat seemed to me then, and has always seemed, almost incredible, even for an expert swimmer. He thus summed up the motives for his action: "I thought that God was first, and I was next, and if I did the best I could, no man could do more than that; so I jumped overboard." It is pleasant to add, that, though a poor man, he utterly declined one of those small donations of money by which we Anglo-Saxons are wont clumsily to express our personal enthusiasms; and I think I appreciated his whole action the more for its coming just at the close of a war during which so many had readily accepted their award of praise or pay for acts of less intrinsic daring than his.

Stir the fire, Annie, with yonder broken fragment of a flag-staff; its truck is still remaining, though the flag is gone, and every nation might claim it. As you stir, the burning brands evince a remembrance of their sea-lost life, the sparks drift away like foam-flakes, the flames wave and flap like sails, and the wail of the chimney sings a second shipwreck. As the tiny scintillations gleam and scatter and vanish in the soot of the chimney-wall, instead of "There goes the parson, and there goes the clerk," it must be the captain and the crew we watch. A drift-wood fire should always have children to tend it; for there is something childlike about it, unlike the steadier glow

of walnut logs. It has a coaxing, infantine way of playing with the oddly shaped bits of wood we give it, and of deserting one to caress with flickering impulse another; and at night, when it needs to be extinguished, it is as hard to put to rest as a nursery of children, for some bright little head is constantly springing up anew, from its pillow of ashes. And, in turn, what endless delight children find in the manipulation of a fire!

What a variety of playthings, too, in this fuel of ours; such inexplicable pieces, treenails and tholepins, trucks and sheaves, the lid of a locker, and a broken handspike. These larger fragments are from spars and planks and knees. Some were dropped overboard in this quiet harbor; others may have floated from Fayal or Hispaniola, Mozambique or Zanzibar. This eagle figure-head, chipped and battered, but still possessing highly aquiline features and a single eye, may have tangled its curved beak in the vast weed-beds of the Sargasso Sea, or dipped it in the Sea of Milk. Tell us your story, O heroic but dilapidated bird! and perhaps song or legend may find in it themes that shall be immortal.

The eagle is silent, and I suspect, Annie, that he is but a plain, home-bred fowl after all. But what shall we say to this piece of plank, hung with barnacles that look large enough for the fabled barnacle-goose to emerge from? Observe this fragment a little. Another piece is secured to it, not neatly, as with proper tools, but clumsily, with many nails of different sizes, driven unevenly and with their heads battered awry. Wedged clumsily in between these pieces, and secured by a supplementary nail, is a bit of broken rope. Let us touch that rope tenderly; for who knows what despairing hands may last have clutched it when this rude raft was made? It may, indeed, have been the handiwork of children, on the Penobscot or the St. Mary's River. But its Condition betokens voyages yet longer; and it may just as well have come from the stranded "Golden Rule" on Roncador Reef,—that picturesque shipwreck where (as a rescued woman told me) the eyes of the people in their despair seemed full of sublime resignation, so that there was no confusion or outcry, and even gamblers

and harlots looked death in the face as nobly, for all that could be seen, as the saintly and the pure. Or who knows but it floated round Cape Horn, from that other wreck, on the Pacific shore, of the "Central America," where the rough miners found that there was room in the boats only for their wives and their gold; and where, pushing the women off, with a few men to row them, the doomed husbands gave a cheer of courage as the ship went down.

Here again is a piece of pine wood, cut in notches as for a tally, and with every seventh notch the longest; these notches having been cut deeply at the beginning, and feebly afterwards, stopping abruptly before the end was reached. Who could have carved it? Not a school-boy awaiting vacation, or a soldier expecting his discharge; for then each tally would have been cut off, instead of added. Nor could it be the squad of two soldiers who garrison Rose Island; for their tour of duty lasts but a week. There are small barnacles and sea-weed too, which give the mysterious stick a sort of brevet antiquity. It has been long adrift, and these little barnacles, opening and closing daily their minute valves, have kept meanwhile their own register, and with their busy fringed fingers have gathered from the whole Atlantic that small share of its edible treasures which sufficed for them. Plainly this waif has had its experiences. It was Robinson Crusoe's, Annie, depend upon it. We will save it from the flames, and when we establish our marine museum, nothing save a veritable piece of the North Pole shall be held so valuable as this undoubted relic from Juan Fernandez.

But the night deepens, and its reveries must end. With the winter will pass away the winter-storms, and summer will bring its own more insidious perils. Then the drowsy old seaport will blaze into splendor, through saloon and avenue, amidst which many a bright career will end suddenly and leave no sign. The ocean tries feebly to emulate the profounder tragedies of the shore. In the crowded halls of gay hotels, I see wrecks drifting hopelessly, dismasted and rudderless, to be stranded on hearts harder and more cruel than Brenton's Reef, yet hid in smiles falser than its

fleecy foam. What is a mere forsaken ship, compared with stately houses from which those whom I first knew in their youth and beauty have since fled into midnight and despair?

But one last gleam upon our hearth lights up your innocent eyes, little Annie, and dispels the gathering shade. The flame dies down again, and you draw closer to my side. The pure moon looks in at the southern window, replacing the ruddier glow; while the fading embers lisp and prattle to one another, like drowsy children, more and more faintly, till they fall asleep.

AN ARTIST'S CREATION.

When I reached Kenmure's house, one August evening, it was rather a disappointment to find that he and his charming Laura had absented themselves for twenty-four hours. I had not seen them together since their marriage; my admiration for his varied genius and her unvarying grace was at its height, and I was really annoyed at the delay. My fair cousin, with her usual exact housekeeping, had prepared everything for her guest, and then bequeathed me, as she wrote, to Janet and baby Marian. It was a pleasant arrangement, for between baby Marian and me there existed a species of passion, I might almost say of betrothal, ever since that little three-year-old sunbeam had blessed my mother's house by lingering awhile in it, six months before. Still I went to bed disappointed, though the delightful windows of the chamber looked out upon the glimmering bay, and the swinging lanterns at the yard-arms of the frigates shone like some softer constellation beneath the brilliant sky. The house was so close upon the water that the cool waves seemed to plash deliciously against its very basement; and it was a comfort to think that, if there were no adequate human greetings that night, there would be plenty in the morning, since Marian would inevitably be pulling my eyelids apart before sunrise.

It was scarcely dawn when I was roused by a little arm round my neck, and waked to

think I had one of Raphael's cherubs by my side. Fingers of waxen softness were ruthlessly at work upon my eyes, and the little form that met my touch felt lithe and elastic, like a kitten's limbs. There was just light enough to see the child, perched on the edge of the bed, her soft blue dressing-gown trailing over the white night-dress, while her black and long-fringed eyes shone through the dimness of morning. She yielded gladly to my grasp, and I could fondle again the silken hair, the velvety brunette cheek, the plump, childish shoulders. Yet sleep still half held me, and when my cherub appeared to hold it a cherubic practice to begin the day with a demand for lively anecdote, I was fain drowsily to suggest that she might first tell some stories to her doll. With the sunny readiness that was a part of her nature, she straightway turned to that young lady,—plain Susan Halliday, with both cheeks patched, and eyes of different colors,—and soon discoursed both her and me into repose.

When I waked again, it was to find the child conversing with the morning star, which still shone through the window, scarcely so lucent as her eyes, and bidding it go home to its mother, the sun. Another lapse into dreams, and then a more vivid awakening, and she had my ear at last, and won story after story, requiting them with legends of her own youth, "almost a year ago,"—how she was perilously lost, for instance, in the small front yard, with a little playmate, early in the afternoon, and how they came and peeped into the window, and thought all the world had forgotten them. Then the sweet voice, distinct in its articulation as Laura's, went straying off into wilder fancies,—a chaos of autobiography and conjecture, like the letters of a war correspondent. You would have thought her little life had yielded more pangs and fears than might have sufficed for the discovery of the North Pole; but breakfast-time drew near at last, and Janet's honest voice was heard outside the door. I rather envied the good Scotchwoman the pleasant task of polishing the smooth cheeks and combing the dishevelled silk; but when, a little later, the small maiden was riding down stairs in my arms, I envied no one.

At sight of the bread and milk, my cherub was transformed into a hungry human

child, chiefly anxious to reach the bottom of her porringer. I was with her a great deal that day. She gave no manner of trouble: it was like having the charge of a floating butterfly, endowed with warm arms to clasp, and a silvery voice to prattle. I sent Janet out to sail, with the other servants, by way of frolic, and Marian's perfect temperament was shown in the way she watched the departing.

"There they go," she said, as she stood and danced at the window. "Now they are out of sight."

"What!" I said, "are you pleased to have your friends go?"

"Yes," she answered; "but I shall be pleased-er to see them come back."

Life to her was no alternation between joy and grief, but only between joy and delight.

Twilight brought us to an improvised concert. Climbing the piano-stool, she went over the notes with her little taper fingers, touching the keys in a light, knowing way, that proved her a musician's child. Then I must play for her, and let the dance begin. This was a wondrous performance on her part, and consisted at first in hopping up and down on one spot, with no change of motion, but in her hands. She resembled a minute and irrepressible Shaker, or a live and beautiful marionnette. Then she placed Janet in the middle of the floor, And performed the dance round her, after the manner of Vivien and Merlin. Then came her supper, which, like its predecessors, was a solid and absorbing meal; then one more fairy story, to magnetize her off, and she danced and sang herself up stairs. And if she first came to me in the morning with a halo round her head, she seemed still to retain it when I at last watched her kneeling in the little bed—perfectly motionless, with her hands placed together, and her long lashes sweeping her cheeks—to repeat two verses of a hymn which Janet had taught her. My nerves quivered a little when I saw that Susan Halliday had also been duly prepared for the night, and had been put in the same attitude, so far as her jointless anatomy permitted. This being ended, the doll and her

mistress reposed together, and only an occasional toss of the vigorous limbs, or a stifled baby murmur, would thenceforth prove, through the darkened hours, that the one figure had in it more of life than the other.

On the next morning Kenmure and Laura came back to us, and I walked down to receive them at the boat. I had forgotten how striking was their appearance, as they stood together. His broad, strong, Saxon look, his manly bearing and clear blue eyes, enhanced the fascination of her darker beauty.

America is full of the short-lived bloom and freshness of girlhood; but it is a rare thing in one's life to see a beauty that really controls with a permanent charm. One must remember such personal loveliness, as one recalls some particular moonlight or sunset, with a special and concentrated joy, which the multiplicity of fainter impressions cannot disturb. When in those days we used to read, in Petrarch's one hundred and twenty-third sonnet, that he had once beheld on earth angelic manners and celestial charms, whose very remembrance was a delight and an affliction, since it made all else appear but dream and shadow, we could easily fancy that nature had certain permanent attributes which accompanied the name of Laura.

Our Laura had that rich brunette beauty before which the mere snow and roses of the blonde must always seem wan and unimpassioned. In the superb suffusions of her cheek there seemed to flow a tide of passions and powers that might have been tumultuous in a meaner woman, but over which, in her, the clear and brilliant eyes and the sweet, proud mouth presided in unbroken calm. These superb tints implied resources only, not a struggle. With this torrent from the tropics in her veins, she was the most equable person I ever saw, and had a supreme and delicate good-sense, which, if not supplying the place of genius, at least comprehended its work. Not intellectually gifted herself, perhaps, she seemed the cause of gifts in others, and furnished the atmosphere in which all showed their best. With the steady and thoughtful enthusiasm of her Puritan ancestors, she combined that charm which is so

rare among their descendants,—a grace which fascinated the humblest, while it would have been just the same in the society of kings. Her person had the equipoise and symmetry of her mind. While it had its separate points of beauty, each a source of distinct and peculiar pleasure,—as, the outline of her temples, the white line that parted her nightblack hair, the bend of her wrists, the moulding of her finger-tips,—yet these details were lost in the overwhelming sweetness of her presence, and the serene atmosphere that she diffused over all human life.

A few days passed rapidly by us. We walked and rode and boated and read. Little Marian came and went, a living sunbeam, a self-sufficing thing. It was soon obvious that she was far less demonstrative toward her parents than toward me; while her mother, gracious to her as to all, yet rarely caressed her, and Kenmure, though habitually kind, was inclined to ignore her existence, and could scarcely tolerate that she should for one instant preoccupy his wife. For Laura he lived, and she must live for him. He had a studio, which I rarely entered and Marian never, though Laura was almost constantly there; and after the first cordiality was past, I observed that their daily expeditions were always arranged for only two. The weather was beautiful, and they led the wildest outdoor life, cruising all day or all night among the islands, regardless of hours, and almost of health. No matter: Kenmure liked it, and what he liked she loved. When at home, they were chiefly in the studio, he painting, modelling, poetizing perhaps, and she inseparably united with him in all. It was very beautiful, this unworldly and passionate love, and I could have borne to be omitted in their daily plans,—since little Marian was left to me,—save that it seemed so strange to omit her also. Besides, there grew to be something a little oppressive in this peculiar atmosphere; it was like living in a greenhouse.

Yet they always spoke in the simplest way of this absorbing passion, as of something about which no reticence was needed; it was too sacred not to be mentioned; it would be wrong not to utter freely to all the world what was doubtless the best thing the world possessed. Thus Kenmure made Laura his model in all his

art; not to coin her into wealth or fame,—he would have scorned it; he would have valued fame and wealth only as instruments for proclaiming her. Looking simply at these two lovers, then, it was plain that no human union could be more noble or stainless. Yet so far as others were concerned, it sometimes seemed to me a kind of duplex selfishness, so profound and so undisguised as to make one shudder. "Is it," I asked myself at such moments, "a great consecration, or a great crime?" But something must be allowed, perhaps, for my own private dis-satisfactions in Marian's behalf.

I had easily persuaded Janet to let me have a peep every night at my darling, as she slept; and once I was surprised to find Laura sitting by the small white bed. Graceful and beautiful as she always was, she never before had seemed to me so lovely, for she never had seemed quite like a mother. But I could not demand a sweeter look of tenderness than that with which she now gazed upon her child.

Little Marian lay with one brown, plump hand visible from its full white sleeve, while the other nestled half hid beneath the sheet, grasping a pair of blue morocco shoes, the last acquisition of her favorite doll. Drooping from beneath the pillow hung a handful of scarlet poppies, which the child had wished to place under her head, in the very superfluous project of putting herself to sleep thereby. Her soft brown hair was scattered on the sheet, her black lashes lay motionless upon the olive cheeks. Laura wished to move her, that I might see her the better.

"You will wake her," exclaimed I, in alarm.

"Wake this little dormouse?" Laura lightly answered. "Impossible."

And, twining her arms about her, the young mother lifted the child from the bed, three or four times in succession, while the healthy little creature remained utterly undisturbed, breathing the same quiet breath. I watched Laura with amazement; she seemed transformed.

She gayly returned my eager look, and then, seeming suddenly to penetrate its

meaning, cast down her eyes, while the color mounted into her cheeks. "You thought," she said, almost sternly, "that I did not love my child."

"No," I said half untruthfully.

"I can hardly wonder," she continued, more sadly, "for it is only what I have said to myself a thousand times. Sometimes I think that I have lived in a dream, and one that few share with me. I have questioned others, and never yet found a woman who did not admit that her child was more to her, in her secret soul, than her husband. What can they mean? Such a thought is foreign to my very nature."

"Why separate the two?" I asked.

"I must separate them in thought," she answered, with the air of one driven to bay by her own self-reproaching. "I had, like other young girls, my dream of love and marriage. Unlike all the rest, I believe, I found my visions fulfilled. The reality was more than the imagination; and I thought it would be so with my love for my child. The first cry of that baby told the difference to my ear. I knew it all from that moment; the bliss which had been mine as a wife would never be mine as a mother. If I had not known what it was to adore my husband, I might have been content with my love for Marian. But look at that exquisite creature as she lies there asleep, and then think that I, her mother, should desert her if she were dying, for aught I know, at one word from him!"

"Your feeling does not seem natural," I said, hardly knowing what to answer.

"What good does it serve to know that?" she said, defiantly. "I say it to myself every day. Once when she was ill, and was given back to me in all the precious helplessness of babyhood, there was such a strange sweetness in it, I thought the charm might remain; but it vanished when she could run about once more. And she is such a healthy, self-reliant little thing," added Laura, glancing toward the bed with a momentary look of motherly pride that seemed strangely out of place amid these self-denunciations. "I wish her to be so," she added. "The best service I can do for

her is to teach her to stand alone. And at some day," continued the beautiful woman, her whole face lighting up with happiness, "she may love as I have loved."

"And your husband," I said, after a pause,—"does your feeling represent his?"

"My husband," she said, "lives for his genius, as he should. You that know him, why do you ask?"

"And his heart?" I said, half frightened at my own temerity.

"Heart?" she answered. "He loves me."

Her color mounted higher yet; she had a look of pride, almost of haughtiness. All else seemed forgotten; she had turned away from the child's little bed, as if it had no existence. It flashed upon me that something of the poison of her artificial atmosphere was reaching her already.

Kenmure's step was heard in the hall, and, with fire in her eyes, she hastened to meet him. I found myself actually breathing more freely after the departure of that enchanting woman, in danger of perishing inwardly, I said to myself, in an air too lavishly perfumed. Bending over Marian, I wondered if it were indeed possible that a perfectly healthy life had sprung from that union too intense and too absorbed. Yet I had often noticed that the child seemed to wear the temperaments of both her parents as a kind of playful disguise, and to peep at you, now out of the one, now from the other, showing that she had her own individual life behind.

As if by some infantine instinct, the darling turned in her sleep, and came unconsciously nearer me. With a half-feeling of self-reproach, I drew around my neck, inch by inch, the little arms that tightened with a delicious thrill; and so I half reclined there till I myself dozed, and the watchful Janet, looking in, warned me away. Crossing the entry to my own chamber, I heard Kenmure and Laura down stairs, but I knew that I should be superfluous, and felt that I was sleepy.

I had now, indeed, become always superfluous when they were together, though never when they were apart. Even they must be separated sometimes, and then each

sought me, in order to discourse about the other. Kenmure showed me every sketch he had ever made of Laura. There she was, through all the range of her beauty,—there she was in clay, in cameo, in pencil, in water-color, in oils. He showed me also his poems, and, at last, a longer one, for which pencil and graver had alike been laid aside. All these he kept in a great cabinet she had brought with her to their housekeeping; and it seemed to me that he also treasured every flower she had dropped, every slender glove she had worn, every ribbon from her hair. I could not wonder, seeing his passion as it was. Who would not thrill at the touch of some such slight memorial of Mary of Scotland, or of Heloise? and what was all the regal beauty of the past to him? He found every room adorned when she was in it, empty when she had gone,—save that the trace of her was still left on everything, and all appeared but as a garment she had worn. It seemed that even her great mirror must retain, film over film, each reflection of her least movement, the turning of her head, the ungloving of her hand. Strange! that, with all this intoxicating presence, she yet led a life so free from self, so simple, so absorbed, that all trace of consciousness was excluded, and she was as free from vanity as her own child.

As we were once thus employed in the studio, I asked Kenmure, abruptly, if he never shrank from the publicity he was thus giving Laura. "Madame Recamier was not quite pleased," I said, "that Canova had modelled her bust, even from imagination. Do you never shrink from permitting irreverent eyes to look on Laura's beauty? Think of men as you know them. Would you give each of them her miniature, perhaps to go with them into scenes of riot and shame?"

"Would to Heaven I could!" said he, passionately. "What else could save them, if that did not? God lets his sun shine on the evil and on the good, but the evil need it most."

There was a pause; and then I ventured to ask him a question that had been many times upon my lips unspoken.

"Does it never occur to you," I said, "that Laura cannot live on earth forever?"

"You cannot disturb me about that," he answered, not sadly, but with a set, stern look, as if fencing for the hundredth time against an antagonist who was foredoomed to be his master in the end. "Laura will outlive me; she must outlive me. I am so sure of it that, every time I come near her, I pray that I may not be paralyzed, and die outside her arms. Yet, in any event, what can I do but what I am doing,—devote my whole soul to the perpetuation of her beauty? It is my only dream,—to re-create her through art. What else is worth doing? It is for this I have tried-through sculpture, through painting, through verse—to depict her as she is. Thus far I have failed. Why have I failed? Is it because I have not lived a life sufficiently absorbed in her? or is it that there is no permitted way by which, after God has reclaimed her, the tradition of her perfect loveliness may be retained on earth?"

The blinds of the piazza doorway opened, the sweet sea-air came in, the low and level rays of yellow sunset entered as softly as if the breeze were their chariot; and softer and stiller and sweeter than light or air, little Marian stood on the threshold. She had been in the fields with Janet, who had woven for her breeze-blown hair a wreath of the wild gerardia blossoms, whose purple beauty had reminded the good Scotchwoman of her own native heather. In her arms the child bore, like a little gleaner, a great sheaf of graceful golden-rod, as large as her grasp could bear. In all the artist's visions he had seen nothing so aerial, so lovely; in all his passionate portraitures of his idol, he had delineated nothing so like to her. Marian's cheeks mantled with rich and wine-like tints, her hair took a halo from the sunbeams, her lips parted over the little, milk-white teeth; she looked at us with her mother's eyes. I turned to Kenmure to see if he could resist the influence.

He scarcely gave her a glance. "Go, Marian," he said, not impatiently,—for he was too thoroughly courteous ever to be ungracious, even to a child,—but with a steady indifference that cut me with more pain than if he had struck her.

The sun dropped behind the horizon, the halo faded from the shining hair and every ray of light from the childish face. There came in its place that deep, wondering sadness which is more touching than any maturer sorrow,—just as a child's illness melts our hearts more than that of man or woman, it seems so premature and so plaintive. She turned away; it was the very first time I had ever seen the little face drawn down, or the tears gathering in the eyes. By some kind providence, the mother, coming in flushed and beautiful with walking, met Marian on the piazza, and caught the little thing in her arms with unwonted tenderness. It was enough for the elastic child. After one moment of such bliss she could go to Janet, go anywhere; and when the same graceful presence came in to us in the studio, we also could ask no more.

We had music and moonlight, and were happy. The atmosphere seemed more human, less unreal. Going up stairs at last, I looked in at the nursery, and found my pet rather flushed, and I fancied that she stirred uneasily. It passed, whatever it was; for next morning she came in to wake me, looking, as usual, as if a new heaven and earth had been coined purposely for her since she went to sleep. We had our usual long and important discourse,—this time tending to protracted narrative, of the Mother-Goose description,—until, if it had been possible for any human being to be late for breakfast in that house, we should have been the offenders. But she ultimately went downstairs on my shoulder, and, as Kenmure and Laura were already out rowing, the baby put me in her own place, sat in her mother's chair, and ruled me with a rod of iron. How wonderful was the instinct by which this little creature, who so seldom heard one word of parental severity or parental fondness, knew so thoroughly the language of both! Had I been the most depraved of children, or the most angelic, I could not have been more sternly excluded from the sugar-bowl, or more overwhelmed with compensating kisses.

Later on that day, while little Marian was taking the very profoundest nap that ever a baby was blessed with, (she had a pretty way of dropping asleep in unexpected

corners of the house, like a kitten,) I somehow strayed into a confidential talk with Janet about her mistress. I was rather troubled to find that all her loyalty was for Laura, with nothing left for Kenmure, whom, indeed, she seemed to regard as a sort of objectionable altar, on which her darlings were being sacrificed. When she came to particulars, certain stray fears of my own were confirmed. It seemed that Laura's constitution was not fit, Janet averred, to bear these irregular hours, early and late; and she plaintively dwelt on the untasted oatmeal in the morning, the insufficient luncheon, the precarious dinner, the excessive walking and boating, the evening damps. There was coming to be a look about Laura such as her mother had, who died at thirty. As for Marian,—but here the complaint suddenly stopped; it would have required far stronger provocation to extract from the faithful soul one word that might seem to reflect on Marian's mother.

Another year, and her forebodings had come true. It is needless to dwell on the interval. Since then I have sometimes felt a regret almost insatiable in the thought that I should have been absent while all that gracious loveliness was fading and dissolving like a cloud; and yet at other times it has appeared a relief to think that Laura would ever remain to me in the fulness of her beauty, not a tint faded, not a lineament changed. With all my efforts, I arrived only in time to accompany Kenmure home at night, after the funeral service. We paused at the door of the empty house,—how empty! I hesitated, but Kenmure motioned to me to follow him in.

We passed through the hall and went up stairs. Janet met us at the head of the stairway, and asked me if I would go in to look at little Marian, who was sleeping. I begged Kenmure to go also but he refused, almost savagely, and went on with heavy step into Laura's deserted room.

Almost the moment I entered the child's chamber, she waked up suddenly, looked at me, and said, "I know you, you are my friend." She never would call me her cousin,

I was always her friend. Then she sat up in bed, with her eyes wide open, and said, as if stating a problem which had been put by for my solution, "I should like to see my mother."

How our hearts are rent by the unquestioning faith of children, when they come to test the love that has so often worked what seemed to them miracles,—and ask of it miracles indeed! I tried to explain to her the continued existence of her mother, and she listened to it as if her eyes drank in all that I could say, and more. But the apparent distance between earth and heaven baffled her baby mind, as it so often and so sadly baffles the thoughts of us elders. I wondered what precise change seemed to her to have taken place. This all-fascinating Laura, whom she adored, and who had yet never been to her what other women are to their darlings,—did heaven seem to put her farther off, or bring her more near? I could never know. The healthy child had no morbid questionings; and as she had come into the world to be a sunbeam, she must not fail of that mission. She was kicking about the bed, by this time, in her nightgown, and holding her pink little toes in all sorts of difficult attitudes, when she suddenly said, looking me full in the face: "If my mother was so high up that she had her feet upon a star, do you think that I could see her?"

This astronomical apotheosis startled me for a moment, but I said unhesitatingly, "Yes," feeling sure that the lustrous eyes that looked in mine could certainly see as far as Dante's, when Beatrice was transferred from his side to the highest realm of Paradise. I put my head beside hers upon the pillow, and stayed till I thought she was asleep.

I then followed Kenmure into Laura's chamber. It was dusk, but the after-sunset glow still bathed the room with imperfect light, and he lay upon the bed, his hands clenched over his eyes.

There was a deep bow-window where Laura used to sit and watch us, sometimes, when we put off in the boat. Her aeolian harp was in the casement, breaking its heart

in music. A delicate handkerchief was lodged between the cushions of the window-seat,—the very handkerchief she used to wave, in summer days long gone. The white boats went sailing beneath the evening light, children shouted and splashed in the water, a song came from a yacht, a steam-whistle shrilled from the receding steamer; but she for whom alone those little signs of life had been dear and precious would henceforth be as invisible to our eyes as if time and space had never held her; and the young moon and the evening star seemed but empty things unless they could pilot us to some world where the splendor of her loveliness could match their own.

Twilight faded, evening darkened, and still Kenmure lay motionless, until his strong form grew in my moody fancy to be like some carving of Michel Angelo's, more than like a living man. And when he at last startled me by speaking, it was with a voice so far off and so strange, it might almost have come wandering down from the century when Michel Angelo lived.

"You are right," he said. "I have been living in a fruitless dream. It has all vanished. The absurdity of speaking of creative art! With all my life-long devotion, I have created nothing. I have kept no memorial of her presence, nothing to perpetuate the most beautiful of lives."

Before I could answer, the door came softly open, and there stood in the doorway a small white figure, holding aloft a lighted taper of pure alabaster. It was Marian in her little night-dress, with the loose blue wrapper trailing behind her, let go in the effort to hold carefully the doll, Susan Halliday, robed also for the night.

"May I come in?" said the child.

Kenmure was motionless at first: then, looking over his shoulder, said merely, "What?"

"Janet said," continued Marian, in her clear and methodical way, "that my mother was up in heaven, and would help God hear my prayers at any rate; but if I pleased, I

could come and say them by you."

A shudder passed over Kenmure; then he turned away, and put his hands over his eyes. She waited for no answer, but, putting down the candlestick, in her wonted careful manner, upon a chair, she began to climb upon the bed, lifting laboriously one little rosy foot, then another, still dragging after her, with great effort, the doll. Nestling at her father's breast, I saw her kneel.

"Once my mother put her arm round me, when I said my prayers." She made this remark, under her breath, less as a suggestion, it seemed, than as the simple statement of a fact.

Instantly I saw Kenmure's arm move, and grasp her with that strong and gentle touch of his which I had so often noticed in the studio,—a touch that seemed quiet as the approach of fate, and equally resistless. I knew him well enough to understand that iron adoption.

He drew her toward him, her soft hair was on his breast, she looked fearlessly into his eyes, and I could hear the little prayer proceeding, yet in so low a whisper that I could not catch one word. She was infinitely solemn at such times, the darling; and there was always something in her low, clear tone, through all her prayings and philosophizings, which was strangely like her mother's voice. Sometimes she paused, as if to ask a question, and at every answer I could see her father's arm tighten.

The moments passed, the voices grew lower yet, the candle flickered and went out, the doll slid to the ground. Marian had drifted away upon a vaster ocean than that whose music lulled her from without,—upon that sea whose waves are dreams. The night was wearing on, the lights gleamed from the anchored vessels, the water rippled serenely against the low sea-wall, the breeze blew gently in. Marian's baby breathing grew deeper and more tranquil; and as all the sorrows of the weary earth might be imagined to exhale themselves in spring through the breath of violets, so I

prayed that it might be with Kenmure's burdened heart, through hers. By degrees the strong man's deeper respirations mingled with those of the child, and their two separate beings seemed merged and solved into identity, as they slumbered, breast to breast, beneath the golden and quiet stars. I passed by without awaking them, and I knew that the artist had attained his dream.

IN A WHERRY.

We have a phrase in Oldport, "What New-Yorkers call poverty: to be reduced to a pony phaeton." In consequence of a November gale, I am reduced To a similar state of destitution, from a sail-boat to a wherry; and, like others of the deserving poor, I have found many compensations in my humbler condition. Which is the more enjoyable, rowing or sailing? If you sail before the wind, there is the glorious vigor of the breeze that fills your sails; you get all of it you have room for, and a ship of the line could do no more; indeed, your very nearness to the water increases the excitement, since the water swirls and boils up, as it unites in your wake, and seems to clutch at the low stern of your sail-boat, and to menace the hand that guides the helm. Or if you beat to windward, it is as if your boat climbed a liquid hill, but did it with bounding and dancing, like a child; there is the plash of the lighter ripples against the bow, and the thud of the heavier waves, while the same blue water is now transformed to a cool jet of white foam over your face, and now to a dark whirlpool in your lee. Sailing gives a sense of prompt command, since by a single movement of the tiller you effect so great a change of direction or transform motion into rest; there is, therefore, a certain magic in it: but, on the other hand, there is in rowing a more direct appeal to your physical powers; you do not evade or cajole the elements by a cunning device of keel and canvas, you meet them man-fashion and subdue them. The motion of the oars is like the strong motion of a bird's wings; to sail a boat is to ride upon an eagle, but to row is to be an eagle. I prefer rowing,—at

least till I can afford another sail-boat.

What is a good day for rowing? Almost any day that is good for living. Living is not quite agreeable in the midst of a tornado or an equinoctial storm, neither is rowing. There are days when rowing is as toilsome and exhausting a process as is Bunyan's idea of virtue; while there are other days, like the present, when it seems a mere Oriental passiveness and the forsaking of works,—just an excuse to Nature for being out among her busy things. For even at this stillest of hours there is far less repose in Nature than we imagine. What created thing can seem more patient than yonder kingfisher on the sea-wall? Yet, as we glide near him, we shall see that no creature can be more full of concentrated life; all his nervous system seems on edge, every instant he is rising or lowering on his feet, the tail vibrates, the neck protrudes or shrinks again, the feathers ruffle, the crest dilates; he talks to himself with an impatient chirr, then presently hovers and dives for a fish, then flies back disappointed. We say "free as birds," but their lives are given over to arduous labors. And so, when our condition seems most dreamy, our observing faculties are sometimes desperately on the alert, and we find afterwards, to our surprise, that we have missed nothing. The best observer in the end is not he who works at the microscope or telescope most unceasingly, but he whose whole nature becomes sensitive and receptive, drinking in everything, like a sponge that saturates itself with all floating vapors and odors, though it seems inert and unsuspicious until you press it and it tells the tale.

Most men do their work out of doors and their dreaming at home; and those whose work is done at home need something like a wherry in which to dream out of doors. On a squally day, with the wind northwest, it is a dream of action, and to round yonder point against an ebbing tide makes you feel as if you were Grant before Richmond; when you put about, you gallop like Sheridan, and the winds and waves become a cavalry escort. On other days all elements are hushed into a dream of peace, and you look out upon those once stormy distances as Landseer's sheep look

into the mouth of the empty cannon on a dismantled fort. These are the days for revery, and your thoughts fly forth, gliding without friction over this smooth expanse; or, rather, they are like yonder pair of white butterflies that will flutter for an hour just above the glassy surface, traversing miles of distance before they alight again.

By a happy trait of our midsummer, these various phases of wind and water may often be included in a single day. On three mornings out of four the wind blows northwest down our bay, then dies to a calm before noon. After an hour or two of perfect stillness, you see the line of blue ripple coming up from the ocean till it conquers all the paler water, and the southwest breeze sets in. This middle zone of calm is like the noonday of the Romans, when they feared to speak, lest the great god Pan should be awakened. While it lasts, a thin, aerial veil drops over the distant hills of Conanicut, then draws nearer and nearer till it seems to touch your boat, the very nearest section of space being filled with a faint disembodied blueness, like that which fills on winter days, in colder regions, the hollows of the snow. Sky and sea show but gradations of the same color, and afford but modifications of the same element. In this quietness, yonder schooner seems not so much to lie at anchor in the water as to anchor the water, so that both cease to move; and though faint ripples may come and go elsewhere on the surface, the vessel rests in this liquid island of absolute calm. For there certainly is elsewhere a sort of motionless movement, as Keats speaks of "a little noiseless noise among the leaves," or as the summer clouds form and disappear without apparent wind and without prejudice to the stillness. A man may lie in the profoundest trance and still be breathing, and the very pulsations of the life of nature, in these calm hours, are to be read in these changing tints and shadows and ripples, and in the mirage-bewildered outlines of the islands in the bay. It is this incessant shifting of relations, this perpetual substitution of fantastic for real values, this inability to trust your own eye or ear unless the mind makes its own corrections,—that gives such an inexhaustible attraction to life beside the ocean. The

sea-change comes to you without your waiting to be drowned. You must recognize the working of your own imagination and allow for it. When, for instance, the sea-fog settles down around us at nightfall, it sometimes grows denser and denser till it apparently becomes more solid than the pavements of the town, or than the great globe itself; and when the fog-whistles go wailing on through all the darkened hours, they seem to be signalling not so much for a lost ship as for a lost island.

How unlike are those weird and gloomy nights to this sunny noon, when I rest my oars in this sheltered bay, where a small lagoon makes in behind Coaster's Harbor Island, and the very last breath and murmur of the ocean are left outside! The coming tide steals to the shore in waves so light they are a mere shade upon the surface till they break, and then die speechless for one that has a voice. And even those rare voices are the very most confidential and silvery whispers in which Nature ever spoke to man; the faintest summer insect seems resolute and assured beside them; and yet it needs but an indefinite multiplication of these sounds to make up the thunder of the surf. It is so still that I can let the wherry drift idly along the shore, and can watch the life beneath the water. The small fry cluster and evade between me and the brink; the half-translucent shrimp glides gracefully undisturbed, or glances away like a flash if you but touch the surface; the crabs waddle or burrow, the smaller species mimicking unconsciously the hue of the soft green sea-weed, and the larger looking like motionless stones, covered with barnacles and decked with fringing weeds. I am acquainted with no better Darwinian than the crab; and however clumsy he may be when taken from his own element, he has a free and floating motion which is almost graceful in his own yielding and buoyant home. It is so with all wild creatures, but especially with those of water and air. A gull is not reckoned an especially graceful bird, but yonder I see one, snowy white, that has come to fish in this safe lagoon, and it dips and rises on its errands as lightly as a butterfly or a swallow. Beneath that neighboring causeway the water-rats run over the stones, lithe and eager and alert, the body carried low, the head raised now and

then like a hound's, the tail curving gracefully and aiding the poise; now they are running to the water as if to drink, now racing for dear life along the edge, now fairly swimming, then devoting an interval to reflection, like squirrels, then again searching over a pile of sea-weed and selecting some especial tuft, which is carried, with long, sinuous leaps, to the unseen nest. Indeed, man himself is graceful in his unconscious and direct employments: the poise of a fisherman, for instance, the play of his arm, the cast of his line or net,—these take the eye as do the stealthy movements of the hunter, the fine attitudes of the wood-chopper, the grasp of the sailor on the helm. A haystack and a boat are always picturesque objects, and so are the men who are at work to build or use them. So is yonder stake-net, glistening in the noonday light,—the innumerable meshes drooping in soft arches from the high stakes, and the line of floats stretching shoreward, like tiny stepping-stones; two or three row-boats are gathered round it, with fishermen in red or blue shirts, while one white sail-boat hovers near. And I have looked down on our beach in spring, at sunset, and watched them drawing nets for the young herring, when the rough men looked as graceful as the nets they drew, and the horseman who directed might have been Redgauntlet on the Solway Sands.

I suppose it is from this look of natural fitness that a windmill is always such an appropriate object by the sea-shore. It is simply a four-masted schooner, stranded on a hill-top, and adapting itself to a new sphere of duty. It can have needed but a slight stretch of invention in some seaman to combine these lofty vans, and throw over them a few remodelled sails. The principle of their motion is that by which a vessel beats to windward; the miller spreads or reefs his sails, like a sailor,—reducing them in a high wind to a mere "pigeon-wing" as it is called, two or three feet in length, or in some cases even scudding under bare poles. The whole structure vibrates and creaks under rapid motion, like a mast; and the angry vans, disappointed of progress, are ready to grind to powder all that comes within their grasp, as they revolve hopelessly in this sea of air.

When the sun grows hot, I like to take refuge in a sheltered nook beside Goat Island Lighthouse, where the wharf shades me, and the resonant plash of waters multiplies itself among the dark piles, increasing the delicious sense of coolness. While the noonday bells ring twelve, I take my rest. Round the corner of the pier the fishing-boats come gliding in, generally with a boy asleep forward, and a weary man at the helm; one can almost fancy that the boat itself looks weary, having been out since the early summer sunrise. In contrast to this expression of labor ended, the white pleasure-boats seem but to be taking a careless stroll by water; while a skiff full of girls drifts idly along the shore, amid laughter and screaming and much aimless splash. More resolute and business-like, the boys row their boat far up the bay; then I see a sudden gleam of white bodies, and then the boat is empty, and the surrounding water is sprinkled with black and bobbing heads. The steamboats look busier yet, as they go puffing by at short intervals, and send long waves up to my retreat; and then some schooner sails in, full of life, with a white ripple round her bows, till she suddenly rounds to drops anchor, and is still. Opposite me, on the landward side of the bay, the green banks slope to the water; on yonder cool piazza there is a young mother who swings her baby in the hammock, or a white-robed figure pacing beneath the trailing vines. Peace and lotus-eating on shore; on the water, even in the stillest noon, there are life and sparkle and continual change.

One of those fishermen whose boats have just glided to their moorings is to me a far more interesting person than any of his mates, though he is perhaps the only one among them with whom I have never yet exchanged a word. There is good reason for it; he has been deaf and dumb since boyhood. He is reported to be the boldest sailor among all these daring men; he is the last to retreat before the coming storm; the first after the storm to venture through the white and whirling channels, between dangerous ledges, to which others give a wider berth. I do not wonder at this, for think how much of the awe and terror of the tempest must vanish if the ears be closed! The ominous undertone of the waves on the beach and the muttering thunder

pass harmless by him. How infinitely strange it must be to have the sight of danger, but not the sound! Fancy such a deprivation in war, for instance, where it is the sounds, after all, that haunt the memory the longest; the rifle's crack, the irregular shots of skirmishers, the long roll of alarm, the roar of great guns. This man would have missed them all. Were a broadside from an enemy's gunboat to be discharged above his head, he would not hear it; he would only recognize, by some jarring of his other senses, the fierce concussion of the air.

How much deeper seems his solitude than that of any other "lone fisher on the lonely sea"! Yet all such things are comparative; and while the others contrast that wave-tossed isolation with the cheeriness of home, his home is silent too. He has a wife and children; they all speak, but he hears not their prattle or their complaints. He summons them with his fingers, as he summons the fishes, and they are equally dumb to him. Has he a special sympathy with those submerged and voiceless things? Dunfish, in the old newspapers, were often called "dumb'd fish"; and they perchance come to him as to one of their kindred. They may have learned, like other innocent things, to accept this defect of utterance, and even imitate it. I knew a deaf-and-dumb woman whose children spoke and heard; but while yet too young for words, they had learned that their mother was not to be reached in that way; they never cried or complained before her, and when most excited would only whisper. Her baby ten months old, if disturbed in the night, would creep to her and touch her lips, to awaken her, but would make no noise.

One might fancy that all men who have an agonizing sorrow or a fearful secret would be drawn by irresistible attraction into the society of the deaf and dumb. What awful passions might not be whispered, what terror safely spoken, in the charmed circle round yonder silent boat,—a circle whose centre is a human life which has not all the susceptibilities of life, a confessional where even the priest cannot hear! Would it not relieve sorrow to express itself, even if unheeded? What more could one ask than a dumb confidant? and if deaf also, so much the safer. To be sure, he

would give you neither absolution nor guidance; he could render nothing in return, save a look or a clasp of the hand; nor can the most gifted or eloquent friendship do much more. Ah! but suddenly the thought occurs, suppose that the defect of hearing, as of tongue, were liable to be loosed by an overmastering emotion, and that by startling him with your hoarded confidence you were to break the spell! The hint is too perilous; let us row away.

A few strokes take us to the half-submerged wreck of a lime-schooner that was cut to the water's edge, by a collision in a gale, twelve months ago. The water kindled the lime, the cable was cut, the vessel drifted ashore and sunk, still blazing, at this little beach. When I saw her, at sunset, the masts had been cut away, and the flames held possession on board. Fire was working away in the cabin, like a live thing, and sometimes glared out of the hatchway; anon it clambered along the gunwale, like a school-boy playing, and the waves chased it as in play; just a flicker of flame, then a wave would reach up to overtake it; then the flames would be, or seem to be, where the water had been; and finally, as the vessel lay careened, the waves took undisturbed possession of the lower gunwale, and the flames of the upper. So it burned that day and night; part red with fire, part black with soaking; and now twelve months have made all its visible parts look dry and white, till it is hard to believe that either fire or water has ever touched it. It lies over on its bare knees, and a single knee, torn from the others, rests imploringly on the shore, as if that had worked its way to land, and perished in act of thanksgiving. At low tide, one half the frame is lifted high in air, like a dead tree in the forest.

Perhaps all other elements are tenderer in their dealings with what is intrusted to them than is the air. Fire, at least, destroys what it has ruined; earth is warm and loving, and it moreover conceals; water is at least caressing,—it laps the greater part of this wreck with protecting waves, covers with sea-weeds all that it can reach, and protects with incrusting shells. Even beyond its grasp it tosses soft pendants of moss that twine like vine-tendrils, or sway in the wind. It mellows harsh colors into

beauty, and Ruskin grows eloquent over the wave-washed tint of some tarry, weather-beaten boat. But air is pitiless: it dries and stiffens all outline, and bleaches all color away, so that you can hardly tell whether these ribs belonged to a ship or an elephant; and yet there is a certain cold purity in the shapes it leaves, and the birds it sends to perch upon these timbers are a more graceful company than lobsters or fishes. After all, there is something sublime in that sepulture of the Parsees, who erect near every village a dokhma, or Tower of Silence, upon whose summit they may bury their dead in air.

Thus widely may one's thoughts wander from a summer boat. But the season for rowing is a long one, and far outlasts in Oldport the stay of our annual guests. Sometimes in autumnal mornings I glide forth over water so still, it seems as if saturated by the Indian-summer with its own indefinable calm. The distant islands lift themselves on white pedestals of mirage; the cloud-shadows rest softly on Conanicut; and what seems a similar shadow on the nearer slopes of Fort Adams is in truth but a mounted battery, drilling, which soon moves and slides across the hazy hill like a cloud.

I hear across nearly a mile of water the faint, Sharp orders and the sonorous blare of the trumpet That follows each command; the horsemen gallop and wheel; suddenly the band within the fort strikes up for guard-mounting, and I have but to shut my eyes to be carried back to warlike days that passed by,—was it centuries ago? Meantime, I float gradually towards Brenton's Cove; the lawns that reach to the water's edge were never so gorgeously green in any summer, and the departure of the transient guests gives to these lovely places an air of cool seclusion; when fashion quits them, the imagination is ready to move in. An agreeable sense of universal ownership comes over the winter-staying mind in Oldport. I like to keep up this little semblance of habitation on the part of our human birds of passage; it is very pleasant to me, and perhaps even pleasanter to them, that they should call these emerald slopes their own for a month or two; but when they lock the doors in

autumn, the ideal key reverts into my hands, and it is evident that they have only been "tenants by the courtesy," in the fine legal phrase. Provided they stay here long enough to attend to their lawns and pay their taxes, I am better satisfied than if these estates were left to me the whole year round.

The tide takes the boat nearer to the fort; the horsemen ride more conspicuously, with swords and trappings that glisten in the sunlight, while the white fetlocks of the horses twinkle in unison as they move. One troop-horse without a rider wheels and gallops with the rest, and seems to revel in the free motion. Here also the tide reaches or seems to reach the very edge of the turf; and when the light battery gallops this way, it is as if it were charging on my floating fortress. Upon the other side is a scene of peace; and a fisherman sings in his boat as he examines the floats of his stake-net, hand over hand. A white gull hovers close above him, and a dark one above the horsemen, fit emblems of peace and war. The slightest sounds, the rattle of an oar, the striking of a hoof against a stone, are borne over the water to an amazing distance, as if the calm bay amid its seeming quiet, were watchful of the slightest noise. But look! in a moment the surface is rippled, the sky is clouded, a swift change comes over the fitful mood of the season; the water looks colder and deeper, the greensward assumes a chilly darkness, the troopers gallop away to their stables, and the fisherman rows home. That indefinable expression which separates autumn from summer creeps almost in an instant over all. Soon, even upon this Isle of Peace, it will be winter.

Each season, as winter returns, I try in vain to comprehend this wonderful shifting of expression that touches even a thing so essentially unchanging as the sea. How delicious to all the senses is the summer foam above yonder rock; in winter the foam is the same, the sparkle as radiant, the hue of the water scarcely altered; and yet the effect is, by comparison, cold, heavy, and leaden. It is like that mysterious variation which chiefly makes the difference between one human face and another; we call it by vague names, and cannot tell in what it lies; we only know that when expression

changes, all is gone. No warmth of color, no perfection of outline can supersede those subtile influences which make one face so winning that all human affection gravitates to its spell, and another so cold or repellent that it dwells forever in loneliness, and no passionate heart draws near. I can fancy the ocean beating in vague despair against its shores in winter, and moaning, "I am as beautiful, as restless, as untamable as ever: why are my cliffs left desolate? why am I not loved as I was loved in summer?"

MADAM DELIA'S EXPECTATIONS.

Madam Delia sat at the door of her show-tent, which, as she discovered too late, had been pitched on the wrong side of the Parade. It was "Election day" in Oldport, and there must have been a thousand people in the public square; there were really more than the four policemen on duty could properly attend to, so that half of them had leisure to step into Madam Delia's tent, and see little Gerty and the rattlesnakes. It was past the appointed hour; but the exhibition had never yet been known to open for less than ten spectators, and even the addition of the policemen only made eight. So the mistress of the show sat in resolute expectation, a little defiant of the human race. It was her thirteenth annual tour, and she knew mankind.

Surely there were people enough; surely they had money enough; surely they were easily pleased. They gathered in crowds to hear crazy Mrs. Green denouncing the city government for sending her to the poorhouse in a wagon instead of a carriage. They thronged to inspect the load of hay that was drawn by the two horses whose harness had been cut to pieces, and then repaired by Denison's Eureka Cement. They all bought whips with that unfailing readiness which marks a rural crowd; they bought packages of lead-pencils with a dollar so skilfully distributed through every six parcels that the oldest purchaser had never found more than ten cents in his. They let the man who cured neuralgia rub his magic curative on their foreheads, and

allowed the man who cleaned watch-chains to dip theirs in the purifying powder. They twirled the magic arrow, which never by any chance rested at the corner compartments where the gold watches and the heavy bracelets were piled, but perpetually recurred to the side stations, and indicated only a beggarly prize of india-rubber sleeve-buttons. They bought ten cents' worth of jewelry, obtaining a mingled treasure of two breast-pins, a plain gold ring, an enamelled ring, and "a piece of California gold." But still no added prizes in the human lottery fell to the show-tent of Madam Delia.

As time went on and the day grew warmer, the crowd grew visibly less enterprising, and business flagged. The man with the lifting-machine pulled at the handles himself, a gratuitous exhibition before a circle of boys now penniless. The man with the metallic polish dipped and redipped his own watch-chain. The men at the booths sat down to lunch upon the least presentable of their own pies. The proprietor of the magic arrow, who had already two large breastpins on his dirty shirt, selected from his own board another to grace his coat-collar, as if thereby to summon back the waning fortunes of the day. But Madam Delia still sat at her post, undaunted. She kept her eye on two sauntering militia-men in uniform, but they only read her sign and seated themselves on the curbstone, to smoke. Then a stout black soldier came in sight; but he turned and sat down at a table to eat oysters, served by a vast and smiling matron of his own race. But even this, though perhaps the most wholly cheerful exhibition that the day yielded, had no charms for Madam Delia. Her own dinner was ordered at the tavern after the morning show; and where is the human being who does not resent the spectacle of another human being who dines earlier than himself?

It grew warmer, so warm that the canvas walls of the tent seemed to grasp a certain armful of heat and keep it inexorably in; so warm that the out-of-door man was dozing as he leaned against the tent-stake, and only recovered himself at the sound of Madam Delia's penetrating voice, and again began to summon people in, though

there was nobody within hearing. It was so warm that Mr. De Marsan, born Bangs, the wedded husband of Madam Delia, dozed as he walked up and down the sidewalk, and had hardly voice enough to testify, as an unconcerned spectator, to the value of the show. Only the unwearied zeal of the showwoman defied alike thermometer and neglect, She kept her eye on everything,—on Old Bill as he fed the monkeys within, on Monsieur Comstock as he hung the trapeze for the performance, on the little girls as they tried to peddle their songs, on the sleepy out-of-door man, and on the people who did not draw near. If she could, she would have played all the parts in her own small company, and would have put the inexhaustible nervous energies of her own New England nature (she was born at Meddibemps, State of Maine) into all. Apart from this potent stimulus, not a soul in the establishment, save little Gerty, possessed any energy whatever. Old Bill had unfortunately never learned total abstinence from the wild animals among which he had passed his life; Monsieur Comstock's brains had chiefly run into his arms and legs; and Mr. De Marsan, the nominal head of the establishment, was a peaceful Pennsylvanian, who was wont to move as slowly as if he were one of those processions that take a certain number of hours to pass a given point. This Madam Delia understood and expected; he was an innocent who was to be fed, clothed, and directed; but his languor was no excuse for the manifest feebleness of the out-of-door man. "That man don't know how to talk no more 'n nothin' at all," said Madam Delia reproachfully, to the large policeman who stood by her. "He never speaks up bold to nobody. Why don't he tell 'em what's inside the tent? I don't want him to say no more 'n the truth, but he might tell that. Tell 'em about Gerty, you nincum! Tell 'em about the snakes. Tell 'em what Comstock is. 'T ain't the real original Comstock" (this to the policeman), "it's only another that used to perform with him in Comstock Brothers. This one can't swaller, so we leave out the knives."

"Where's t' other?" said the sententious policeman, whose ears were always open for suspicious disappearances.

"Didn't you hear?" cried the incredulous lady. "Scattered! Gone! Went off one day with a box of snakes and two monkeys. Come, now, you must have heard. We had a sight of trouble pay-in' detectives."

"What for a looking fellow was he?" said the policeman.

"Dark complected," was the reply. "Black mustache. He understood his business, I tell you now. Swallered five or six knives to onst, and give good satisfaction to any audience. It was him that brought us Gerty and Anne,—that's the other little girl. I didn't know as they was his children, and didn't know as they was, but one day he said he got 'em from an old woman in New York, and that was all he knew."

"They're smart," said the man, whom Gerty had just coaxed into paying three cents instead of two for Number Six of the "Singer's Journal,"—a dingy little sheet, containing a song about a fat policeman, which she had brought to his notice.

"You'd better believe it," said Madam Delia, proudly. "At least Gerty is; Anne ain't. I tell 'em, Gerty knows enough for both. Anne don't know nothin', and what she does know she don't know sartin. All she can do is just to hang on: she's the strongest and she does the heavy business on the trapeze and parallel bars."

"Is Gerty good on that?" said the public guardian.

"I tell you," said the head of the establishment.—"Go and dress, children! Five minutes!"

All this time Madam Delia had been taking occasional fees from the tardy audience, had been making change, detecting counterfeit currency, and discerning at a glance the impostures of one deceitful boy who claimed to have gone out on a check and lost it. At last Stephen Blake and his little sister entered, and the house was regarded as full. These two revellers had drained deep the cup of "Election-day" excitement. They had twirled all the arrows, bought all the jewelry, inspected all the colored eggs, blown at all the spirometers, and tasted all the egg-pop which the festal day required. These delights exhausted, they looked round for other worlds to conquer,

saw Madam Delia at her tent-door, and were conquered by her.

She did, indeed, look energetic and comely as she sat at the receipt of custom, her smooth black hair relieved by gold ear-rings, her cotton velvet sack by a white collar, and her dark gingham dress by a cheap breastpin and by linen cuffs not very much soiled. The black leather bag at her side had a well-to-do look; but all else in the establishment looked a little poverty-stricken. The tent was made of very worn and soiled canvas, and was but some twenty-five feet square. There were no seats, and the spectators sat on the grass. There was a very small stage raised some six feet; this was covered with some strips of old carpet, and surrounded by a few old and tattered curtains. Through their holes you could easily see the lithe brown shoulders of the little girls as they put on their professional suits; and, on the other side, Monsieur Comstock, scarcely hidden by the drapery, leaned against a cross-bar, and rested his chin upon his tattooed arms as he counted the spectators. Among these, Mr. De Marsan, pacing slowly, distributed copies of this programme:—

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL TOUR. ---- MADAM DELIA'S MUSEUM AND VARIETY COMBINATION-WILL EXHIBIT. ---- PROCLAMATION TO THE PUBLIC.—The Proprietors would say that they have abandoned the old and played-out practice of decorating the outer walls of all principal streets with flaming Posters and Handbills, and have adopted the congenial, and they trust successful, plan of advertising with Programmes, giving a full and accurate description as now organized, which will be distributed in Hotels, Saloons, Factories, Workshops, and all private dwellings, by their Special Agents, three days before the exhibition takes place. ---- MADAM DELIA WITH HER PET SNAKES. MISS GERTY, THE CHILD WONDER, DANSEUSE AND CONTORTIONIST, will appear in her wonderful feats at each performance. MONS. COMSTOCK, THE CHAMPION SWORD-SWALLOWER, will also exhibit his wonderful power of swallowing Five Swords, measuring from 14 to 22 inches in length. It is not so much the beauty of

this feat that makes it so remarkable, as its seeming impossibility. ---- MASTER BOBBY, THE BANJO SOLOIST AND BURLESQUE. ---- COMIC ACROBAT, BY MISS GERTY AND MONS. COMSTOCK. ---- MADAM DELIA, THE WONDERFUL AND ORIGINAL SNAKE-TAMER, with her Pets, measuring 12 feet in length and weighing 50 lbs. A pet Rattlesnake, 15 years of age, captured on the Prairies of Illinois,— oldest on exhibition. ---- In connection with this Exhibition there are ANT-EATERS, AFRICAN MONKEYS, &C. Cosmoramic Stereoscopic Scenes in the United States and other Countries, including a view of the Funeral Procession of President Taylor, which is alone worth the price of admission. ---- Exhibition every half-hour, during day and evening. Secure your seats early! ---- ADMISSION 20 CENTS. Particular care will be taken and nothing shall occur to offend the most fastidious.

Stephen and his little sister strolled about the tent meanwhile. The final preparations went slowly on. The few spectators teased the ant-eater in one corner, or the first violin in another. One or two young farmers' boys were a little uproarious with egg-pop, and danced awkward breakdowns at the end of the tent. Then a cracked bell sounded and the curtain rose, showing hardly more of the stage than was plainly visible before.

Little Gerty, aged ten, came in first, all rumpled gauze and tarnished spangles, to sing. In a poor little voice, feebler and shriller than the chattering of the monkeys, she sang a song about the "Grecian Bend," and enacted the same, walking round and round the stage whirling her tawdry finery. Then Anne, aged twelve, came in as a boy and joined her. Both the girls had rather pretty features, blue eyes, and tightly curling hair; both had pleasing faces; but Anne was solid and phlegmatic, while Gerty was keen and flexible as a weasel, and almost as thin. Presently Anne went out and reappeared as "Master Bobby" of the hills, making love to Gerty in that capacity, through song and dance. Then Gerty was transformed by the addition of a single scarf into a "Highland Maid," and danced a fling; this quite gracefully, to the

music of two violins. Exeunt the children and enter "Madam Delia and her pets."

The show-woman had laid aside her velvet sack and appeared with bare neck and arms. Over her shoulders hung a rattlesnake fifteen feet long, while a smaller specimen curled from each hand. The reptiles put their cold, triangular faces against hers, they touched her lips, they squirmed around her; she tied their tails together in elastic knots that soon undid; they reared their heads above her black locks till she looked like a stage Medusa, then laid themselves lovingly on her shoulder, and hissed at the audience. Then she lay down on the stage and pillowed her head on the writhing mass. She opened her black bag and took out a tiny brown snake which she placidly transferred to her bosom; then turned to a barrel into which she plunged her arm and drew out a black, hissing coil of mingled heads and tails. Her keen, goodnatured face looked cheerfully at the audience through it all, and took away the feeling of disgust, and something of the excitement of fear.

The lady and the pets retiring, Gerty's hour of glory came. She hated singing and only half enjoyed character dancing, but in posturing she was in her glory. Dressed in soiled tights that showed every movement of her little body, she threw herself upon the stage with a hand-spring, then kissed her hand to the audience, and followed this by a back-somerset. Then she touched her head by anslow effort to her heels; then turned away, put her palms to the ground, raised her heels gradually in the air, and in this inverted position kissed first one hand, then the other, to the spectators. Then she crossed the stage in a series of somersets, then rolled back like a wheel; then held a hoop in her two hands and put her whole slender body through it, limb after limb. Then appeared Monsieur Comstock. He threw a hand-spring and gave her his feet to stand upon; she grasped them with her hands and inverted herself, her feet pointing skyward. Then he resumed the ordinary attitude of rational beings and she lay on her back across his uplifted palms, which supported her neck and feet; then she curled herself backward around his waist, almost touching head and heels. Indeed, whatever the snakes had done to Madam Delia, Gerty seemed

possessed with a wish to do to Monsieur Comstock, all but the kissing. Then that eminent foreigner vanished, and the odors of his pipe came faintly through the tattered curtain, while Anne entered to help Gerty in the higher branches.

A double trapeze—just two horizontal bars suspended at different heights by ropes and straps—had been swung from the tent-roof. Gerty ascended to the upper bar, hung from it by her hand, then by her knees, then by her feet, then sat upon it, leaned slowly backward, suddenly dropped, and as some children in the audience shrieked in terror, she caught by her feet in the side-ropes and came up smiling. It was a part of the play. Then another trapeze was hung, and was set swinging toward the first, and Gerty flung herself in triumph, with varied somersets, from one to the other, while Anne rattled the banjo below and sang,

"I fly through the air with the greatest of ease, A daring young man on the flying trapeeze."

Then the child stopped to rest, while all hands were clapped and only the unreverberating turf kept the feet from echoing also. People flocked in from outside, and Madam Delia was kept busy at the door. Then Gerty came down to the lower bar, while Anne ascended the upper, and hung to it solidly by her knees. Thus suspended, she put out her hands to Gerty, who put her feet into them, and hung head-downward. There was a shuddering pause, while the two children clung thus dizzily, but the audience had seen enough of peril to lose all fear.

"Those straps are safe?" asked Stephen of Mr. De Marsan.

"Law bless you, yes," replied that pleasant functionary. "Comstock's been on 'em."

Precisely as he spoke one of the straps gave downward a little, and then rested firm; it was not a half-inch, but it jarred the performers.

"Gerty, I'm slipping," cried Anne. "We shall fall!"

"No, we sha'n't, silly," said the other, quickly. "Hold on. Comstock, swing me the rope."

Stephen Blake sprang to the stage and swung her the rope by which they had climbed to the upper bar. It fell short and Gerty missed it. Anne screamed, and slipped visibly.

"You can't hold," said Gerty. "Let go my feet. Let me drop."

"You'll be killed," called Anne, slipping still more.

"Drop me, I say!" shouted the resolute Gerty, while the whole audience rose in excitement. Instantly the hands of the elder girl opened and down fell Gerty, headforemost, full twelve feet, striking heavily on her shoulder, while Anne, relieved of the weight, recovered easily her position and slipped down into Stephen's arms. She threw herself down beside the little comrade whose presence of mind had saved at least one of them.

"O Gerty, are you killed?" she said.

"I want Delia," gasped the child.

Madam Delia was at her side already, having rushed from the door, where a surging host of boys had already swept in gratis. Gerty writhed in pain. Stephen felt her collar-bone and found it bent like a horseshoe; and she fainted before she could be taken from the stage.

When restored, she was quite exhausted, and lay for days perfectly subdued and gentle, sleeping most of the time. During these days she had many visitors, and Mr. De Marsan had ample opportunity for the simple enjoyments of his life, tobacco and conversation. Stephen Blake and his sister came often, and while she brought her small treasures to amuse Gerty, he freely pumped the proprietor. Madam Delia had been in the snake business, it appeared, since early youth, thirteen years ago. She had been in De Marsan's employ for eight years before her marriage, and his equal and lawful partner for five years since. At first they had travelled as side-show to a circus, but that was not so good.

"The way is, you see," said Mr. De Marsan, "to take a place like Providence, that's a

good showtown, right along, and pitch your tent and live there. Keep-still pays, they say. You'd have to hire a piece of ground anywhere, for five or six dollars a day, and it don't cost much more by the week. You can board for four or five dollars a week, but if you board by the day it's a dollar and a half." To which words of practical wisdom Stephen listened with pleased interest. It was not so very many years since he had been young enough to wish to run away with a circus; and by encouraging these simple confidences, he brought round the conversation to the children.

But here he was met by a sheer absence of all information as to their antecedents. The original and deceitful Comstock had brought them and left them two years before. Madam Delia had received flattering offers to take her snakes and Gerty into circuses and large museums, but she had refused for the child's own sake. Did Gerty like it? Yes, she would like to be posturing all day; she could do anything she saw done; she "never needed to be taught nothin'," as Mr. De Marsan asserted with vigorous accumulation of negatives. He thought her father or mother must have been in the business, she took to it so easily; but she was just as smart at school in the winter, and at everything else. Was the life good for her? Yes, why not? Rough company and bad language? They could hear worse talk every day in the street. "Sometimes a feller would come in with too much liquor aboard," the showman admitted, "and would begin to talk his nonsense; but Comstock wouldn't ask nothin' better than to pitch such a feller out, especially if he should sarce the little gals. They were good little gals, and Delia set store by 'em."

When Stephen and his sister went back that night to their kind hostesses, Miss Martha and Miss Amy, the soft hearts of those dear old ladies were melted in an instant by the story of Gerty's courage and self-sacrifice. They had lived peacefully all their lives in that motherly old house by the bay-side, where successive generations had lived before them. The painted tiles around the open fire looked as if their fops and fine ladies had stepped out of the Spectator and the Tatler; the great mahogany chairs looked as hospitable as when the French officers were quartered in

the house during the Revolution, and its Quaker owner, Miss Martha's grand-uncle, had carried out a seat that the weary sentinel might sit down. Descended from one of those families of Quaker beauties whom De Lauzun celebrated, they bore the memory of those romantic lives, as something very sacred, in hearts which perhaps held as genuine romances of their own. Miss Martha's sweet face was softened by advancing deafness and by that gentle, appealing look which comes when mind and memory grow a little dimmer, though the loving nature knows no change. "Sister Amy says," she meekly confessed, "that I am losing my memory. But I do not care very much. There are so few things worth remembering!"

They kept house together in sweet accord, and were indeed trained in the neat Quaker ways so thoroughly, that they always worked by the same methods. In opinion and emotion they were almost duplicates. Yet the world holds no absolute and perfect correspondence, and it is useless to affect to conceal—what was apparent to any intimate guest—that there was one domestic question on which perfect sympathy was wanting. During their whole lives they had never been able to take precisely the same view of the best method of grinding Indian meal. Miss Martha preferred to have it from a wind-mill; while Miss Amy was too conscientious to deny that she thought it better when prepared by a water-mill. She said firmly, though gently, that it seemed to her "less gritty."

Living their whole lives in this scarcely broken harmony by the margin of the bay, they had long built together one castle in the air. They had talked of it for many an hour by their evening fire, and they had looked from their chamber windows toward the Red Light upon Rose Island to see if it were coming true. This vision was, that they were to awake some morning after an autumnal storm, and to find an unknown vessel ashore behind the house, without name or crew or passengers; only there was to be one sleeping child, with aristocratic features and a few yards of exquisite embroidery. Years had passed, and their lives were waning, without a glimpse of that precious waif of gentle blood. Once in an October night Miss Martha had been

awakened by a crash, and looking out had seen that their pier had been carried away, and that a dark vessel lay stranded with her bowsprit in the kitchen window. But daylight revealed the schooner Polly Lawton, with a cargo of coal, and the dream remained unfulfilled. They had never revealed it, except to each other.

Moved by a natural sympathy, Miss Martha went with Stephen to see the injured child. Gerty lay asleep on a rather dingy little mattress, with Mr. Comstock's overcoat rolled beneath her head. A day's illness will commonly make even the coarsest child look refined and interesting; and Gerty's physical organization was anything but coarse. Her pretty hair curled softly round her head; her delicate profile was relieved against the rough, dark pillow; and the tips of her little pink ears could not have been improved by art, though they might have been by soap and water. Warm tears came into Miss Martha's eyes, which were quickly followed from corresponding fountains in Madam Delia's.

"Thy own child?" said or rather signalled Miss Martha, forming the letters softly with her lips. Stephen had his own reasons for leaving her to ask this question in all ignorance.

"No, ma'am," said the show-woman. "Not much. Adopted."

"Does thee know her parents?" This was similarly signalled.

"No," said Madam Delia, rather coldly.

"Does thee suppose that they were—"

And here Miss Martha stopped, and the color came as suddenly and warmly to her cheeks as if Monsieur Comstock had offered to marry her, and to settle upon her the snakes as exclusive property. Madam Delia divined the question; she had so often found herself trying to guess the social position of Gerty's parents.

"I don't know as I know," said she, slowly, "whether you ought to know anythin' about it. But I'll tell you what I know. That child's folks," she added, mysteriously, "lived on Quality Hill."

"Lived where?" said Miss Martha, breathless.

"Upper crust," said the other, defining her symbol still further. "No middlins to 'em. Genteel as anybody. Just look here!"

Madam Delia unclasped her leather bag, brought forth from it a mass of checks and tickets, some bird-seed, a small whip, a dog-collar, and a dingy morocco box. This held a piece of an old-fashioned enamelled ring, and a fragment of embroidered muslin marked "A."

"She'd lived with me six months before she brought 'em," said the show-woman, whispering.

The bit of handkerchief was enough. Was it a dream? thought the dear old lady. What the ocean had refused, was this sprite who had lived between earth and air to fulfil? Miss Martha bent softly over the bedside, resting her clean glove on the only dirty mattress it had ever touched, and quietly kissed the child. Then she looked up with a radiant face of perfect resolution.

"Mrs. De Marsan," said she, with dignity that was almost solemnity, "I wish to adopt this child. No one can doubt thy kindness of heart, but thee must see that thee is in no condition to give her suitable care and Christian nurture."

"That's a fact," interposed Madam Delia with a pang

"Then thee will give her to me?" asked Miss Martha, firmly.

Madam Delia threw her apron over her face, and choked and sobbed beneath it for several minutes. Then reappearing, "It's what I've always expected," said she. Then, with a tinge of suspicion, "Would you have taken her without the ring and handkerchief?"

"Perhaps I should," said the other, gently. "But that seems to make it a clearer call."

"Fair enough," said Madam Delia, submitting. "I ain't denyin' of it." Then she reflected and recommenced. "There never was such a smart performin' child as that

since the world began. She can do just anythin', and just as easy! Time and again I might have hired her out to a circus, and she glad of the chance, mind you; but no, I would keep her safe to home. Then when she showed me the ring and the other things, all my expectations altered very sudden; I knowed we couldn't keep her, and I began to mistrust that she would somehow find her folks. I guess my rathers was that she should, considerin'; but I did wish it had been Anne, for she ain't got nothin' better in her than just to live genteel."

"But Anne seems a nice child, too," said Miss Martha, consolingly.

"Well, that's just what she is," replied Madam Delia, with some contempt. "But what is she for a contortionist? Ask Comstock what she's got in her! And how to run the show without Gerty, that's what beats me. Why, folks begin to complain already that we advertise swallerin', and yet don't swaller. But never you mind, ma'am, you shall have Gerty. You shall have her," she added, with a gulp, "if I have to sell out! Go ahead!" And again the apron went over her face.

At this point, Gerty waked up with a little murmur, looked up at Miss Martha's kind face, and smiled a sweet, childish smile. Half asleep still, she put out one thin, muscular little hand, and went to sleep as the old lady took it in hers. A kiss awaked her.

"What has thee been dreaming about, my little girl?" said Miss Martha.

"Angels and things, I guess," said the child, somewhat roused.

"Will thee go home with me and live?" said the lady.

"Yes'm," replied Gerty, and went to sleep again.

Two days later she was well enough to ride to Miss Martha's in a carriage, escorted by Madam Delia and by Anne, "that dull, uninteresting child," as Miss Amy had reluctantly described her, "so different from this graceful Adelaide." This romantic name was a rapid assumption of the soft-hearted Miss Amy's, but, once suggested, it was as thoroughly-fixed as if a dozen baptismal fonts had written it in water.

Madam Delia was sustained, up to the time of Gerty's going, by a sense of self-sacrifice. But this emotion, like other strong stimulants, has its reactions. That remorse for a crime committed in vain, which Dr. Johnson thought the acutest of human emotions, is hardly more depressing than to discover that we have got beyond our depth in virtue, and are in water where we really cannot quite swim,—and this was the good woman's position. During her whole wandering though blameless life,—in her girlish days, when she charmed snakes at Meddibemps, or through her brief time of service as plain Car'line Prouty at the Biddeford mills, or when she ran away from her step-mother and took refuge among the Indians at Orono, or later, since she had joined her fate with that of De Marsan,—she had never been so severely tried.

"That child was so smart," she said, beneath the evening canvas, to her sympathetic spouse. "I always expected when we got old we'd kinder retire on a farm or suthin', and let her and her husband—say Comstock, if he was young enough—run the business. And even after she showed us the ring and things, I thought likely she'd just come into her property somewheres and take care of us. I don't know as I ever thought she'd leave us, either way, and there she's gone."

"She won't forget us," said the peaceful proprietor.

"No," said the wife, "but it's lonesome. If it had only been Anne! I shall miss Gerty the worst kind. And it'll kill the show!"

And to tell the truth, the show languished. Nothing but the happy acquisition of a Chinese giant nearly eight feet high, with slanting eyes and a long pigtail,—a man who did penance in his height for the undue brevity of his undersized nation,—would have saved the "museum."

Meantime the neat proprieties of orderly life found but a poor disciple in Gerty. Her warm heart opened to the dear old ladies; but she found nothing familiar in this phantom of herself, this well-dressed little girl who, after a rapid convalescence, was

introduced at school and "meeting" under the name of Adelaide. The school studies did not dismay her, but she played the jew's-harp at recess, and danced the clog-dance in india-rubbers, to the dismay of the little Misses Grundy, her companions. In the calisthenic exercises she threw beanbags with an untamed vigor that soon ripped the stitches of the bags, and sowed those vegetables in every crack of the school-room floor. There was a ladder in the garden, and it was some comfort to ascend it hand over hand upon the under side, or to hang by her toes from the upper rung, to the terror of her schoolmates.

But she became ashamed of the hardness of her palms, and she grew in general weary of her life. Her clothes pinched her, so did her new boots; Madam Delia had gone to Providence with the show, and Gerty had not so much as seen the new Chinese giant.

Of all days Sunday was the most objectionable, when she had to sit still in Friends' Meeting and think how pleasant it would be to hang by the knees, head downward, from the parapet of the gallery. She liked better the Seamen's Bethel, near by, where there was an aroma of tar and tarpaulin that suggested the odors of the show-tent, and where, when the Methodist exhorter gave out the hymn, "Howl, howl, ye winds of night," the choir rendered it with such vigor that it was like being at sea in a northeaster. But each week made her new life harder, until, having cried herself asleep one Saturday evening, she rose early the next morning for her orisons, which, I regret to say, were as follows:—

"I must get out of this," quoth Gerty, "I must cut and run. I'll make it all right for the old ladies, for I'll send 'em Anne. She'll like it here first rate."

She hunted up such remnants of her original wardrobe as had been thought worth washing and preserving, and having put them on, together with a hat whose trimmings had been vehemently burned by Miss Martha, she set out to seek her fortune. Of all her new possessions, she took only a pair of boots, and those she

carried in her hand as she crept softly down stairs.

"Save us!" exclaimed Biddy, who had been to a Mission Mass of incredible length, and was already sweeping the doorsteps. "Christmas!" she added, as a still more pious ejaculation, when the child said, "Good by, Biddy, I'm off now."

"Where to, thin?" exclaimed Biddy.

"To Providence," said Gerty. "But don't you tell."

"But ye can't go the morn's mornin'," said Biddy. "It's Sunday and there's no cars."

"There's legs," replied the child, briefly, as she closed the door.

"It's much as iver," said the stumpy Hibernian, to herself, as she watched the twinkling retreat of those slim, but vigorous little members.

They had been Gerty's support too long, in body and estate, for her to shrink from trusting them in a walk of a dozen or a score of miles. But the locomotion of Stephen's horse was quicker, and she did not get seriously tired before being overtaken, and—not without difficulty and some hot tears—coaxed back. Fortunately, Madam Delia came down from Providence that evening, on a very unexpected visit, and at the confidential hour of bedtime the child's heart was opened and made a revelation.

"Won't you be mad, if I tell you something?" she said to Madam Delia, abruptly.

"No," said the show-woman, with surprise.

"Won't you let Comstock box my ears?"

"I'll box his if he does," was the indignant answer. The gravest contest that had ever arisen in the museum was when Monsieur Comstock, teased beyond endurance, had thus taken the law into his own hands.

"Well," said Gerty, after a pause, "I ain't a great lady, no more 'n nothin'. Them things I brought to you was Anne's."

"Anne's things?" gasped Madam Delia,—"the ring and the piece of a handkerchief."

"Yes, 'm," said Gerty, "and I've got the rest." And exploring her little trunk, she produced from a slit in the lining the other half of the ring, with the name "Anne Deering."

"You naughty, naughty girl!" said Madam Delia. "How did you get 'em away from Anne?"

"Coaxed her," said the child.

"Well, how did you make her hush up about it?"

"Told her I'd kill her if she said a single word," said Gerty, undauntedly. "I showed her Pa De Marsan's old dirk-knife and told her I'd stick it into her if she didn't hush. She was just such a 'fraid-cat she believed me. She might have known I didn't mean nothin'. Now she can have 'em and be a lady. She was always tallkin' about bein' a lady, and that put it into my head."

"What did she want to be a lady for?" asked Madam Delia, indignantly.

"Said she wanted to have a parlor and dress tight. I don't want to be one of her old ladies. I want to stay with you, Delia, and learn the clog-dance." And she threw her arms round the show-woman's neck and cried herself to sleep.

Never did the energetic proprietress of a Museum and Variety Combination feel a greater exultation than did Madam Delia that night. The child's offence was all forgotten in the delight of the discovery to which it led. If there had been expectations of social glories to accrue to the house of De Marsan through Gerty's social promotion, they melted away; and the more substantial delight of still having someone to love and to be proud of,—some object of tenderness warmer than snakes and within nearer reach than a Chinese giant,—this came in its stead. The show, too, was in a manner on its feet again. De Marsan said that he would rather have Gerty than a hundred-dollar bill. Madam Delia looked forward and saw herself sinking into the vale of years without a sigh,—reaching a period when a serpent fifteen feet long would cease to charm, or she to charm it,—and still having a source of pride

and prosperity in this triumphant girl.

The tent was in its glory on the day of Gerty's return; to be sure, nothing in particular had been washed except the face of Old Bill, but that alone was a marvel compared with which all "Election Day" was feeble, and when you add a paper collar, words can say no more. Monsieur Comstock also had that "ten times barbered" look which Shakespeare ascribes to Mark Antony, and which has belonged to that hero's successors in the histrionic profession ever since. His chin was unnaturally smooth, his mustache obtrusively perfumed, and nothing but the unchanged dirtiness of his hands still linked him, like Antaeus, with the earth. De Marsan had intended some personal preparation, but had been, as usual, in no hurry, and the appointed moment found him, as usual, in his shirt-sleeves. Madam Delia, however, wore a new breastpin and gave Gerty another. And the great new attraction, the Chinese giant, had put on a black broadcloth coat across his bony shoulders, in her honor, and made a vigorous effort to sit up straight, and appear at his ease when off duty. He habitually stooped a good deal in private life, as if there were no object in being eight feet high, except before spectators.

Anne, the placid and imperturbable, was promoted to take the place that Gerty had rejected, in the gentle home of the good sisters. The secret of her birth, whatever it was, never came to light but, she took kindly, as Madam Delia had predicted, to "living genteel," and grew up into a well-behaved mediocrity, unregretful of the show-tent. Yet probably no one reared within the smell of sawdust ever quite outgrew all taste for "the profession," and Anne, even when promoted to good society, never missed seeing a performance when her wandering friends came by. If I told you under what name Gerty became a star in the low-comedy line, after her marriage, you would all recognize it; and if you had seen her in "Queen Pippin" or the "Shooting-Star" pantomime, you would wish to see her again. Her first child was named after Madam Delia, and proved to be a placid little thing, demure enough to have been born in a Quaker family, and exhibiting no contortions or gymnastics but

those common to its years. And you may be sure that the retired show-woman found in the duties of brevet-grand-mother a glory that quite surpassed her expectations.

SUNSHINE AND PETRARCH.

Near my summer home there is a little cove or landing by the bay, where nothing larger than a boat can ever anchor. I sit above it now, upon the steep bank, knee-deep in buttercups, and amid grass so lush and green that it seems to ripple and flow instead of waving. Below lies a tiny beach, strewn with a few bits of drift-wood and some purple shells, and so sheltered by projecting walls that its wavelets plash but lightly. A little farther out the sea breaks more roughly over submerged rocks, and the waves lift themselves, before breaking, in an indescribable way, as if each gave a glimpse through a translucent window, beyond which all ocean's depths might be clearly seen, could one but hit the proper angle of vision. On the right side of my retreat a high wall limits the view, while close upon the left the crumbling parapet of Fort Greene stands out into the foreground, its verdant scarp so relieved against the blue water that each inward-bound schooner seems to sail into a cave of grass. In the middle distance is a white lighthouse, and beyond lie the round tower of old Fort Louis and the soft low hills of Conanicut.

Behind me an oriole chirrups in triumph amid the birch-trees which wave around the house of the haunted window; before me a kingfisher pauses and waits, and a darting blackbird shows the scarlet on his wings. Sloops and schooners constantly come and go, careening in the wind, their white sails taking, if remote enough, a vague blue mantle from the delicate air. Sail-boats glide in the distance,—each a mere white wing of canvas,—or coming nearer, and glancing suddenly into the cove, are put as suddenly on the other tack, and almost in an instant seem far away. There is to-day such a live sparkle on the water, such a luminous freshness on the grass, that it seems, as is so often the case in early June, as if all history were a

dream, and the whole earth were but the creation of a summer's day.

If Petrarch still knows and feels the consummate beauty of these earthly things, it may seem to him some repayment for the sorrows of a life-time that one reader, after all this lapse of years, should choose his sonnets to match this grass, these blossoms, and the soft lapse of these blue waves. Yet any longer or more continuous poem would be out of place to-day. I fancy that this narrow cove prescribes the proper limits of a sonnet; and when I count the lines of ripple within yonder projecting wall, there proves to be room for just fourteen. Nature meets our whims with such little fitnesses. The words which build these delicate structures of Petrarch's are as soft and fine and close-textured as the sands upon this tiny beach, and their monotone, if such it be, is the monotone of the neighboring ocean. Is it not possible, by bringing such a book into the open air, to separate it from the grimness of commentators, and bring it back to life and light and Italy?

The beautiful earth is the same as when this poetry and passion were new; there is the same sunlight, the same blue water and green grass; yonder pleasure-boat might bear, for aught we know, the friends and lovers of five centuries ago; Petrarch and Laura might be there, with Boccaccio and Fiammetta as comrades, and with Chaucer as their stranger guest. It bears, at any rate, if I know its voyagers, eyes as lustrous, voices as sweet. With the world thus young, beauty eternal, fancy free, why should these delicious Italian pages exist but to be tortured into grammatical examples? Is there no reward to be imagined for a delightful book that can match Browning's fantastic burial of a tedious one? When it has sufficiently basked in sunshine, and been cooled in pure salt air, when it has bathed in heaped clover, and been scented, page by page, with melilot, cannot its beauty once more blossom, and its buried loves revive?

Emboldened by such influences, at least let me translate a sonnet, and see if anything is left after the sweet Italian syllables are gone. Before this continent was

discovered, before English literature existed, when Chaucer was a child, these words were written. Yet they are to-day as fresh and perfect as these laburnum-blossoms that droop above my head. And as the variable and uncertain air comes freighted with clover-scent from yonder field, so floats through these long centuries a breath of fragrance, the memory of Laura.

SONNET 129.

"Lieti fiori e felici." O joyous, blossoming, ever-blessed flowers! 'Mid which my queen her gracious footstep sets; O plain, that keep'st her words for amulets And hold'st her memory in thy leafy bowers! O trees, with earliest green of spring-time hours, And spring-time's pale and tender violets! O grove, so dark the proud sun only lets His blithe rays gild the outskirts of your towers! O pleasant country-side! O purest stream, That mirrorest her sweet face, her eyes so clear, And of their living light can catch the beam! I envy you her haunts so close and dear. There is no rock so senseless but I deem It burns with passion that to mine is near.

Goethe compared translators to carriers, who convey good wine to market, though it gets unaccountably watered by the way. The more one praises a poem, the more absurd becomes one's position, perhaps, in trying to translate it. If it is so admirable—is the natural inquiry,—why not let it alone? It is a doubtful blessing to the human race, that the instinct of translation still prevails, stronger than reason; and after one has once yielded to it, then each untranslated favorite is like the trees round a backwoodsman's clearing, each of which stands, a silent defiance, until he has cut it down. Let us try the axe again. This is to Laura singing.

SONNET 134.

"Quando Amor i begli occhi a terra inchina." When Love doth those sweet eyes to earth incline, And weaves those wandering notes into a sigh Soft as his touch, and leads a minstrelsy Clear-voiced and pure, angelic and divine, He makes sweet havoc in this heart of mine, And to my thoughts brings transformation high, So that I say,

"My time has come to die, If fate so blest a death for me design." But to my soul thus steeped in joy the sound Brings such a wish to keep that present heaven, It holds my spirit back to earth as well. And thus I live: and thus is loosed and wound The thread of life which unto me was given By this sole Siren who with us doth dwell.

As I look across the bay, there is seen resting over all the hills, and even upon every distant sail, an enchanted veil of palest blue, that seems woven out of the very souls of happy days,—a bridal veil, with which the sunshine weds this soft landscape in summer. Such and so indescribable is the atmospheric film that hangs over these poems of Petrarch's; there is a delicate haze about the words, that vanishes when you touch them, and reappears as you recede. How it clings, for instance, around this sonnet!

SONNET 191.

"Aura che quelle chiome." Sweet air, that circlest round those radiant tresses, And floatest, mingled with them, fold on fold, Deliciously, and scatterest that fine gold, Then twinest it again, my heart's dear jesses, Thou lingerest on those eyes, whose beauty presses Stings in my heart that all its life exhaust, Till I go wandering round my treasure lost, Like some scared creature whom the night distresses. I seem to find her now, and now perceive How far away she is; now rise, now fall; Now what I wish, now what is true, believe. O happy air! since joys enrich thee all, Rest thee; and thou, O stream too bright to grieve! Why can I not float with thee at thy call?

The airiest and most fugitive among Petrarch's love-poems, so far as I know,—showing least of that air of earnestness which he has contrived to impart to almost all,—is this little ode or madrigal. It is interesting to see, from this, that he could be almost conventional and courtly in moments when he held Laura farthest aloof; and when it is compared with the depths of solemn emotion in his later sonnets, it seems like the soft glistening of young birch-leaves against a background

of pines.

CANZONE XXIII.

"Nova angeletta sovra l' ale accorta." A new-born angel, with her wings extended, Came floating from the skies to this fair shore, Where, fate-controlled, I wandered with my sorrows. She saw me there, alone and unbefriended, She wove a silken net, and threw it o'er The turf, whose greenness all the pathway borrows, Then was I captured; nor could fears arise, Such sweet seduction glimmered from her eyes.

Turn from these light compliments to the pure and reverential tenderness of a sonnet like this:—

SONNET 223.

"Qual donna attende a gloriosa fama." Doth any maiden seek the glorious fame Of chastity, of strength, of courtesy? Gaze in the eyes of that sweet enemy Whom all the world doth as my lady name! How honor grows, and pure devotion's flame, How truth is joined with graceful dignity, There thou mayst learn, and what the path may be To that high heaven which doth her spirit claim; There learn soft speech, beyond all poet's skill, And softer silence, and those holy ways Unutterable, untold by human heart. But the infinite beauty that all eyes doth fill, This none can copy! since its lovely rays Are given by God's pure grace, and not by art.

The following, on the other hand, seems to me one of the Shakespearian sonnets; the successive phrases set sail, one by one, like a yacht squadron; each spreads its graceful wings and glides away. It is hard to handle this white canvas without soiling. Macgregor, in the only version of this sonnet which I have seen, abandons all attempt at rhyme; but to follow the strict order of the original in this respect is a part of the pleasant problem which one cannot bear to forego. And there seems a kind of deity who presides over this union of languages, and who sometimes silently lays the words in order, after all one's own poor attempts have failed.

SONNET 128.

"O passi sparsi; o pensier vaghi e pronti" O wandering steps! O vague and busy dreams! O changeless memory! O fierce desire! O passion strong! heart weak with its own fire; O eyes of mine! not eyes, but living streams; O laurel boughs! whose lovely garland seems The sole reward that glory's deeds require; O haunted life! delusion sweet and dire, That all my days from slothful rest redeems; O beauteous face! where Love has treasured well His whip and spur, the sluggish heart to move At his least will; nor can it find relief. O souls of love and passion! if ye dwell Yet on this earth, and ye, great Shades of Love! Linger, and see my passion and my grief.

Yonder flies a kingfisher, and pauses, fluttering like a butterfly in the air, then dives toward a fish, and, failing, perches on the projecting wall. Doves from neighboring dove-cotes alight on the parapet of the fort, fearless of the quiet cattle who find there a breezy pasture. These doves, in taking flight, do not rise from the ground at once, but, edging themselves closer to the brink, with a caution almost ludicrous in such airy things, trust themselves upon the breeze with a shy little hop, and at the next moment are securely on the wing.

How the abundant sunlight inundates everything! The great clumps of grass and clover are imbedded in it to the roots; it flows in among their stalks, like water; the lilac-bushes bask in it eagerly; the topmost leaves of the birches are burnished. A vessel sails by with plash and roar, and all the white spray along her side is sparkling with sunlight. Yet there is sorrow in the world, and it reached Petrarch even before Laura died,—when it reached her. This exquisite sonnet shows it:—

SONNET 123.

"I' vidi in terra angelici costumi." I once beheld on earth celestial graces, And heavenly beauties scarce to mortals known, Whose memory lends nor joy nor grief alone, But all things else bewilders and effaces. I saw how tears had left their weary traces Within those eyes that once like sunbeams shone, I heard those lips breathe

low and plaintive moan, Whose spell might once have taught the hills their places. Love, wisdom, courage, tenderness, and truth, Made ill their mourning strains more high and dear Than ever wove sweet sounds for mortal ear; And heaven seemed listening in such saddest ruth The very leaves upon the boughs to soothe, Such passionate sweetness filled the atmosphere.

These sonnets are in Petrarch's earlier manner; but the death of Laura brought a change. Look at yonder schooner coming down the bay, straight toward us; she is hauled close to the wind, her jib is white in the sunlight, her larger sails are touched with the same snowy lustre, and all the swelling canvas is rounded into such lines of beauty as scarcely anything else in the world—hardly even the perfect outlines of the human form—can give. Now she comes up into the wind, and goes about with a strong flapping of the sails, smiting on the ear at a half-mile's distance; then she glides off on the other tack, showing the shadowed side of her sails, until she reaches the distant zone of haze. So change the sonnets after Laura's death, growing shadowy as they recede, until the very last seems to merge itself in the blue distance.

SONNET 251.

"Gli occhi di ch' io parlai." Those eyes, 'neath which my passionate rapture rose, The arms, hands, feet, the beauty that erewhile Could my own soul from its own self beguile, And in a separate world of dreams enclose, The hair's bright tresses, full of golden glows, And the soft lightning of the angelic smile That changed this earth to some celestial isle, Are now but dust, poor dust, that nothing knows. And yet I live! Myself I grieve and scorn, Left dark without the light I loved in vain, Adrift in tempest on a bark forlorn; Dead is the source of all my amorous strain, Dry is the channel of my thoughts outworn, And my sad harp can sound but notes of pain.

"And yet I live!" What a pause is implied before these words! the drawing of a long breath, immeasurably long; like that vast interval of heart-beats that precedes Shakespeare's "Since Cleopatra died." I can think of no other passage in literature

that has in it the same wide spaces of emotion.

The following sonnet seems to me the most stately and concentrated in the whole volume. It is the sublimity of a despair not to be relieved by utterance.

SONNET 253.

"Soleasi nel mio cor." She ruled in beauty o'er this heart of mine, A noble lady in a humble home, And now her time for heavenly bliss has come, 'T is I am mortal proved, and she divine. The soul that all its blessings must resign, And love whose light no more on earth finds room Might rend the rocks with pity for their doom, Yet none their sorrows can in words enshrine; They weep within my heart; and ears are deaf Save mine alone, and I am crushed with care, And naught remains to me save mournful breath. Assuredly but dust and shade we are, Assuredly desire is blind and brief, Assuredly its hope but ends in death.

In a later strain he rises to that dream which is more than earth's realities.

SONNET 261.

"Levommi il mio pensiero." Dreams bore my fancy to that region where She dwells whom here I seek, but cannot see. 'Mid those who in the loftiest heaven be I looked on her, less haughty and more fair. She touched my hand, she said, "Within this sphere, If hope deceive not, thou shalt dwell with me: I filled thy life with war's wild agony; Mine own day closed ere evening could appear. My bliss no human brain can understand; I wait for thee alone, and that fair veil Of beauty thou dost love shall wear again." Why was she silent then, why dropped my hand Ere those delicious tones could quite avail To bid my mortal soul in heaven remain?

It vindicates the emphatic reality and pesonality of Petrarch's love, after all, that when from these heights of vision he surveys and resurveys his life's long dream, it becomes to him more and more definite, as well as more poetic, and is farther and farther from a merely vague sentimentalism. In his later sonnets, Laura grows more distinctly individual to us; her traits show themselves as more characteristic, her

temperament more intelligible, her precise influence upon Petrarch clearer. What delicate accuracy of delineation is seen, for instance, in this sonnet!

SONNET 314.

"Dolci durezze e placide repulse." Gentle severity, repulses mild, Full of chaste love and pity sorrowing; Graceful rebukes, that had the power to bring Back to itself a heart by dreams beguiled; A soft-toned voice, whose accents undefiled Held sweet restraints, all duty honoring; The bloom of virtue; purity's clear spring To cleanse away base thoughts and passions wild; Divinest eyes to make a lover's bliss, Whether to bridle in the wayward mind Lest its wild wanderings should the pathway miss, Or else its griefs to soothe, its wounds to bind; This sweet completeness of thy life it is That saved my soul; no other peace I find.

In the following sonnet visions multiply upon visions. Would that one could transfer into English the delicious way in which the sweet Italian rhymes recur and surround and seem to embrace each other, and are woven and unwoven and interwoven, like the heavenly hosts that gathered around Laura.

SONNET 302.

"Gli angeli eletti."

The holy angels and the spirits blest, Celestial bands, upon that day serene When first my love went by in heavenly mien, Came thronging, wondering at the gracious guest. "What light is here, in what new beauty drest?" They said among themselves; "for none has seen Within this age come wandering such a queen From darkened earth into immortal rest." And she, contented with her new-found bliss, Ranks with the purest in that upper sphere, Yet ever and anon looks back on this, To watch for me, as if for me she stayed. So strive, my thoughts, lest that high path I miss. I hear her call, and must not be delayed.

These odes and sonnets are all but parts of one symphony, leading us through a passion strengthened by years and only purified by death, until at last the graceful

lay becomes an anthem and a Nunc dimittis. In the closing sonnets Petrarch withdraws from the world, and they seem like voices from a cloister, growing more and more solemn till the door is closed. This is one of the last:—

SONNET 309.

"Dicemi spesso il mio fidato speglio." Oft by my faithful mirror I am told, And by my mind outworn and altered brow, My earthly powers impaired and weakened now, "Deceive thyself no more, for thou art old!" Who strives with Nature's laws is over-bold, And Time to his commandments bids us bow. Like fire that waves have quenched, I calmly vow In life's long dream no more my sense to fold. And while I think, our swift existence flies, And none can live again earth's brief career, Then in my deepest heart the voice replies Of one who now has left this mortal sphere, But walked alone through earthly destinies, And of all women is to fame most dear.

How true is this concluding line! Who can wonder that women prize beauty, and are intoxicated by their own fascinations, when these fragile gifts are yet strong enough to outlast all the memories of statesmanship and war? Next to the immortality of genius is that which genius may confer upon the object of its love. Laura, while she lived, was simply one of a hundred or a thousand beautiful and gracious Italian women; she had her loves and aversions, joys and griefs; she cared dutifully for her household, and embroidered the veil which Petrarch loved; her memory appeared as fleeting and unsubstantial as that woven tissue. After five centuries we find that no armor of that iron age was so enduring. The kings whom she honored, the popes whom she revered are dust, and their memory is dust, but literature is still fragrant with her name. An impression which has endured so long is ineffaceable; it is an earthly immortality.

"Time is the chariot of all ages to carry men away, and beauty cannot bribe this charioteer." Thus wrote Petrarch in his Latin essays; but his love had wealth that proved resistless and for Laura the chariot stayed.

A SHADOW.

I shall always remember one winter evening, a little before Christmas-time, when I took a long, solitary walk in the outskirts of the town. The cold sunset had left a trail of orange light along the horizon, the dry snow tinkled beneath my feet, and the early stars had a keen, clear lustre that matched well with the sharp sound and the frosty sensation. For some time I had walked toward the gleam of a distant window, and as I approached, the light showed more and more clearly through the white curtains of a little cottage by the road. I stopped, on reaching it, to enjoy the suggestion of domestic cheerfulness in contrast with the dark outside. I could not see the inmates, nor they me; but something of human sympathy came from that steadfast ray.

As I looked, a film of shade kept appearing and disappearing with rhythmic regularity in a corner of the window, as if some one might be sitting in a low rocking-chair close by. Presently the motion ceased, and suddenly across the curtain came the shadow of a woman. She raised in her arms the shadow of a baby, and kissed it; then both disappeared, and I walked on.

What are Raphael's Madonnas but the shadow of a mother's love, so traced as to endure forever? In this picture of mine, the group actually moved upon the canvas. The curtains that hid it revealed it. The ecstasy of human love passed in brief, intangible panorama before me. It was something seen, yet unseen; airy, yet solid; a type, yet a reality; fugitive, yet destined to last in my memory while I live. It said more to me than would any Madonna of Raphael's, for his mother never kisses her child. I believe I have never passed over that road since then, never seen the house, never heard the names of its occupants. Their character, their history, their fate, are all unknown. But these two will always stand for me as disembodied types of humanity,—the Mother and the Child; they seem nearer to me than my immediate neighbors, yet they are as ideal and impersonal as the goddesses of Greece or as

Plato's archetypal man.

I know not the parentage of that child, whether black or white, native or foreign, rich or poor. It makes no difference. The presence of a baby equalizes all social conditions. On the floor of some Southern hut, scarcely so comfortable as a dog-kennel, I have seen a dusky woman look down upon her infant with such an expression of delight as painter never drew. No social culture can make a mother's face more than a mother's, as no wealth can make a nursery more than a place where children dwell. Lavish thousands of dollars on your baby-clothes, and after all the child is prettiest when every garment is laid aside. That becoming nakedness, at least, may adorn the chubby darling of the poorest home.

I know not what triumph or despair may have come and gone through that wayside house since then, what jubilant guests may have entered, what lifeless form passed out. What anguish or what sin may have come between that woman and that child; through what worlds they now wander, and whether separate or in each other's arms,—this is all unknown. Fancy can picture other joys to which the first happiness was but the prelude, and, on the other hand, how easy to imagine some special heritage of human woe and call it theirs!

"I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest, Lord of thy house and hospitality; And Grief, uneasy lover, might not rest Save when he sat within the touch of thee."

Nay, the foretaste of that changed fortune may have been present, even in the kiss. Who knows what absorbing emotion, besides love's immediate impulse, may have been uttered in that shadowy embrace? There may have been some contrition for ill-temper or neglect, or some triumph over ruinous temptation, or some pledge of immortal patience, or some heart-breaking prophecy of bereavement. It may have been simply an act of habitual tenderness, or it may have been the wild reaction toward a neglected duty; the renewed self-consecration of the saint, or the joy of the sinner that repenteth. No matter. She kissed the baby. The feeling of its soft flesh,

the busy struggle of its little arms between her hands, the impatient pressure of its little feet against her knees,—these were the same, whatever the mood or circumstance beside. They did something to equalize joy and sorrow, honor and shame. Maternal love is love, whether a woman be a wife or only a mother. Only a mother!

The happiness beneath that roof may, perhaps, have never reached so high a point as at that precise moment of my passing. In the coarsest household, the mother of a young child is placed on a sort of pedestal of care and tenderness, at least for a time. She resumes something of the sacredness and dignity of the maiden. Coleridge ranks as the purest of human emotions that of a husband towards a wife who has a baby at her breast,—"a feeling how free from sensual desire, yet how different from friendship!" And to the true mother however cultivated, or however ignorant, this period of early parentage is happier than all else, in spite of its exhausting cares. In that delightful book, the "Letters" of Mrs. Richard Trench (mother of the well-known English writer), the most agreeable passage is perhaps that in which, after looking back upon a life spent in the most brilliant society of Europe, she gives the palm of happiness to the time when she was a young mother. She writes to her god-daughter: "I believe it is the happiest time of any woman's life, who has affectionate feelings, and is blessed with healthy and well-disposed children. I know at least that neither the gayeties and boundless hopes of early life, nor the more grave pursuits and deeper affections of later years, are by any means comparable in my recollection with the serene, yet lively pleasure of seeing my children playing on the grass, enjoying their little temperate supper, or repeating 'with holy look' their simple prayers, and undressing for bed, growing prettier for every part of their dress they took off, and at last lying down, all freshness and love, in complete happiness, and an amiable contest for mamma's last kiss."

That kiss welcomed the child into a world where joy predominates. The vast multitude of human beings enjoy existence and wish to live. They all have their

earthly life under their own control. Some religions sanction suicide; the Christian Scriptures nowhere explicitly forbid it; and yet it is a rare thing. Many persons sigh for death when it seems far off, but the desire vanishes when the boat upsets, or the locomotive runs off the track, or the measles set in. A wise physician once said to me: "I observe that every one wishes to go to heaven, but I observe that most people are willing to take a great deal of very disagreeable medicine first." The lives that one least envies—as of the Digger Indian or the outcast boy in the city—are yet sweet to the living. "They have only a pleasure like that of the brutes," we say with scorn. But what a racy and substantial pleasure is that! The flashing speed of the swallow in the air, the cool play of the minnow in the water, the dance of twin butterflies round a thistle-blossom, the thundering gallop of the buffalo across the prairie, nay, the clumsy walk of the grizzly bear; it were doubtless enough to reward existence, could we have joy like such as these, and ask no more. This is the hearty physical basis of animated life, and as step by step the savage creeps up to the possession of intellectual manhood, each advance brings with it new sorrow and new joy, with the joy always in excess.

There are many who will utterly disavow this creed that life is desirable in itself. A fair woman in a ball-room, exquisitely dressed, and possessed of all that wealth could give, once declared to me her belief—and I think honestly—that no person over thirty was consciously happy, or would wish to live, but for the fear of death. There could not even be pleasure in contemplating one's children, she asserted, since they were living in such a world of sorrow. Asking the opinion, within half an hour, of another woman as fair and as favored by fortune, I found directly the opposite verdict. "For my part I can truly say," she answered, "that I enjoy every moment I live." The varieties of temperament and of physical condition will always afford us these extremes; but the truth lies between them, and most persons will endure many sorrows and still find life sweet.

And the mother's kiss welcomes the child into a world where good predominates as

well as joy. What recreants must we be, in an age that has abolished slavery in America and popularized the governments of all Europe, if we doubt that the tendency of man is upward! How much that the world calls selfishness is only generosity with narrow walls,—a too exclusive solicitude to maintain a wife in luxury or make one's children rich! In an audience of rough people a generous sentiment always brings down the house. In the tumult of war both sides applaud an heroic deed. A courageous woman, who had traversed alone, on benevolent errands, the worst parts of New York told me that she never felt afraid except in the solitudes of the country; wherever there was a crowd, she found a protector.

A policeman of great experience once spoke to me with admiration of the fidelity of professional thieves to each other, and the risks they would run for the women whom they loved; when "Bristol Bill" was arrested, he said, there was found upon the burglar a set of false keys, not quite finished, by which he would certainly, within twenty-four hours, have had his mistress out of jail. Parent-Duchatelet found always the remains of modesty among the fallen women of Paris hospitals; and Mayhew, amid the London outcasts, says that he thinks better of human nature every day. Even among politicians, whom it is our American fashion to revile as the chief of sinners, there is less of evil than of good.

In Wilberforce's "Memoirs" there is an account of his having once asked Mr. Pitt whether his long experience as Prime Minister had made him think well or ill of his fellow-men. Mr. Pitt answered, "Well"; and his successor, Lord Melbourne, being asked the same question, answered, after a little reflection, "My opinion is the same as that of Mr. Pitt."

Let us have faith. It was a part of the vigor of the old Hebrew tradition to rejoice when a man-child was born into the world; and the maturer strength of nobler ages should rejoice over a woman-child as well. Nothing human is wholly sad, until it is effete and dying out. Where there is life there is promise. "Vitality is always

hopeful," was the verdict of the most refined and clear-sighted woman who has yet explored the rough mining villages of the Rocky Mountains. There is apt to be a certain coarse virtue in rude health; as the Germanic races were purest when least civilized, and our American Indians did not unlearn chastity till they began to decay. But even where vigor and vice are found together, they still may hold a promise for the next generation. Out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. Parisian wickedness is not so discouraging merely because it is wicked, as from a suspicion that it is draining the life-blood of the nation. A mob of miners or of New York bullies may be uncomfortable neighbors, and may make a man of refinement hesitate whether to stop his ears or to feel for his revolver; but they hold more promise for the coming generations than the line which ends in Madame Bovary or the Vicomte de Camors.

But behind that cottage curtain, at any rate, a new and prophetic life had begun. I cannot foretell that child's future, but I know something of its past. The boy may grow up into a criminal, the woman into an outcast, yet the baby was beloved. It came "not in utter nakedness." It found itself heir of the two prime essentials of existence,—life and love. Its first possession was a woman's kiss; and in that heritage the most important need of its career was guaranteed. "An ounce of mother," says the Spanish proverb, "is worth a pound of clergy." Jean Paul says that in life every successive influence affects us less and less, so that the circumnavigator of the globe is less influenced by all the nations he has seen than by his nurse. Well may the child imbibe that reverence for motherhood which is the first need of man. Where woman is most a slave, she is at least sacred to her son. The Turkish Sultan must prostrate himself at the door of his mother's apartments, and were he known to have insulted her, it would make his throne tremble. Among the savage African Touaricks, if two parents disagree, it is to the mother that the child's obedience belongs. Over the greater part of the earth's surface, the foremost figures in all temples are the Mother and Child. Christian and Buddhist nations, numbering together two thirds of the world's population, unite in this worship. Into the secrets

of the ritual that baby in the window had already received initiation.

And how much spiritual influence may in turn have gone forth from that little one! The coarsest father gains a new impulse to labor from the moment of his baby's birth; he scarcely sees it when awake, and yet it is with him all the time. Every stroke he strikes is for his child. New social aims, new moral motives, come vaguely up to him. The London costermonger told Mayhew that he thought every man would like his son or daughter to have a better start in the world than his own. After all, there is no tonic like the affections. Philosophers express wonder that the divine laws should give to some young girl, almost a child, the custody of an immortal soul. But what instruction the baby brings to the mother! She learns patience, self-control, endurance; her very arm grows strong, so that she can hold the dear burden longer than the father can. She learns to understand character, too, by dealing with it. "In training my first children," said a wise mother to me, "I thought that all were born just the same, and that I was wholly responsible for what they should become. I learned by degrees that each had a temperament of its own, which I must study before I could teach it." And thus, as the little ones grow older, their dawning instincts guide those of the parents; their questions suggest new answers, and to have loved them is a liberal education.

For the height of heights is love. The philosopher dries into a skeleton like that he investigates, unless love teaches him. He is blind among his microscopes, unless he sees in the humblest human soul a revelation that dwarfs all the world beside. While he grows gray in ignorance among his crucibles, every girlish mother is being illuminated by every kiss of her child. That house is so far sacred, which holds within its walls this new-born heir of eternity. But to dwell on these high mysteries would take us into depths beyond the present needs of mother or of infant, and it is better that the greater part of the baby-life should be that of an animated toy.

Perhaps it is well for all of us that we should live mostly on the surfaces of things

and should play with life, to avoid taking it too hard. In a nursery the youngest child is a little more than a doll, and the doll is a little less than a child. What spell does fancy weave on earth like that which the one of these small beings performs for the other? This battered and tattered doll, this shapeless, featureless, possibly legless creature, whose mission it is to be dragged by one arm, or stood upon its head in the bathing-tub, until it finally reverts to the rag-bag whence it came,—what an affluence of breathing life is thrown around it by one touch of dawning imagination! Its little mistress will find all joy unavailing without its sympathetic presence, will confide every emotion to its pen-and-ink ears, and will weep passionate tears if its extremely soiled person is pricked when its clothes are mended. What psychologist, what student of the human heart, has ever applied his subtile analysis to the emotions of a child toward her doll?

I read lately the charming autobiography of a little girl of eight years, written literally from her own dictation. Since "Pet Marjorie" I have seen no such actual self-revelation on the part of a child. In the course of her narration she describes, with great precision and correctness, the travels of the family through Europe in the preceding year, assigning usually the place of importance to her doll, who appears simply as "My Baby." Nothing can be more grave, more accurate, more serious than the whole history, but nothing in it seems quite so real and alive as the doll. "When we got to Nice, I was sick. The next morning the doctor came, and he said I had something that was very much like scarlet fever. Then I had Annie take care of baby, and keep her away, for I was afraid she would get the fever. She used to cry to come to me, but I knew it wouldn't be good for her."

What firm judgment is here, what tenderness without weakness, what discreet motherhood! When Christmas came, it appears that baby hung up her stocking with the rest. Her devoted parent had bought for her a slate with a real pencil. Others provided thimble and scissors and bodkin and a spool of thread, and a travelling-shawl with a strap, and a cap with tarletan ruffles. "I found baby with the

cap on, early in the morning, and she was so pleased she almost jumped out of my arms." Thus in the midst of visits to the Coliseum and St. Peter's, the drama of early affection goes always on. "I used to take her to hear the band, in the carriage, and she went everywhere I did." But the love of all dolls, as of other pets, must end with a tragedy, and here it comes. "The next place we went to was Lucerne. There was a lovely lake there, but I had a very sad time. One day I thought I'd take baby down to breakfast, and, as I was going up stairs, my foot slipped and baby broke her head. And O, I felt so bad! and I cried out, and I ran up stairs to Annie, and mamma came, and O, we were all so sorry! And mamma said she thought I could get another head, but I said, 'It won't be the same baby.' And mamma said, maybe we could make it seem so."

At this crisis the elder brother and sister departed for Mount Righi. "They were going to stay all night, and mamma and I stayed at home to take care of each other. I felt very bad about baby and about their going, too. After they went, mamma and I thought we would go to the little town and see what we could find." After many difficulties, a waxen head was discovered. "Mamma bought it, and we took it home and put it on baby; but I said it wasn't like my real baby, only it was better than having no child at all!"

This crushing bereavement, this reluctant acceptance of a child by adoption, to fill the vacant heart,—how real and formidable is all this rehearsal of the tragedies of maturer years! I knew an instance in which the last impulse of ebbing life was such a gush of imaginary motherhood.

A dear friend of mine, whose sweet charities prolong into a third generation the unbounded benevolence of old Isaac Hopper, used to go at Christmas-time with dolls and other gifts to the poor children on Randall's Island. Passing the bed of a little girl whom the physician pronounced to be unconscious and dying, the kind visitor insisted on putting a doll into her arms. Instantly the eyes of the little invalid

opened, and she pressed the gift eagerly to her heart, murmuring over it and caressing it. The matron afterwards wrote that the child died within two hours, wearing a happy face, and still clinging to her new-found treasure.

And beginning with this transfer of all human associations to a doll, the child's life interfuses itself readily among all the affairs of the elders. In its presence, formality vanishes, the most oppressive ceremonial is a little relieved when children enter. Their influence is pervasive and irresistible, like that of water, which adapts itself to any landscape,—always takes its place, welcome or unwelcome,—keeps its own level and seems always to have its natural and proper margin.

Out of doors how children mingle with nature, and seem to begin just where birds and butterflies leave off! Leigh Hunt, with his delicate perceptions, paints this well: "The voices of children seem as natural to the early morning as the voice of the birds. The suddenness, the lightness, the loudness, the sweet confusion, the sparkling gayety, seem alike in both. The sudden little jangle is now here and now there; and now a single voice calls to another, and the boy is off like the bird." So Heine, with deeper thoughtfulness, noticed the "intimacy with the trees" of the little wood-gatherer in the Hartz Mountains; soon the child whistled like a linnet, and the other birds all answered him; then he disappeared in the thicket with his bare feet and his bundle of brushwood.

"Children," thought Heine, "are younger than we, and can still remember the time when they were trees or birds, and can therefore understand and speak their language; but we are grown old, and have too many cares, and too much jurisprudence and bad poetry in our heads."

But why go to literature for a recognition of what one may see by opening one's eyes? Before my window there is a pool, two rods square, that is haunted all winter by children,—clearing away the snow of many a storm, if need be, and mining downward till they strike the ice. I look this morning from the window, and the pond

is bare. In a moment I happen to look again, and it is covered with a swarm of boys; a great migrating flock has settled upon it, as if swooping down from parts unknown to scream and sport themselves here. The air is full of their voices; they have all tugged on their skates instantaneously, as it were by magic. Now they are in a confused cluster, now they sweep round and round in a circle, now it is broken into fragments and as quickly formed again; games are improvised and abandoned; there seems to be no plan or leader, but all do as they please, and yet somehow act in concert, and all chatter all the time. Now they have alighted, every one, upon the bank of snow that edges the pond, each scraping a little hollow in which to perch. Now every perch is vacant again, for they are all in motion; each moment increases the jangle of shrill voices,—since a boy's outdoor whisper to his nearest crony is as if he was hailing a ship in the offing,—and what they are all saying can no more be made out than if they were a flock of gulls or blackbirds. I look away from the window once more, and when I glance out again there is not a boy in sight. They have whirled away like snowbirds, and the little pool sleeps motionless beneath the cheerful wintry sun. Who but must see how gradually the joyous life of the animal rises through childhood into man,—since the soaring gnats, the glancing fishes, the sliding seals are all represented in this mob of half-grown boyhood just released from school.

If I were to choose among all gifts and qualities that which, on the whole, makes life pleasantest, I should select the love of children. No circumstance can render this world wholly a solitude to one who has that possession. It is a freemasonry. Wherever one goes, there are the little brethren and sisters of the mystic tie. No diversity of race or tongue makes much difference. A smile speaks the universal language. "If I value myself on anything," said the lonely Hawthorne, "it is on having a smile that children love." They are such prompt little beings; they require so little prelude; hearts are won in two minutes, at that frank period, and so long as you are true to them they will be true to you. They need no argument, no bribery.

They have a hearty appetite for gifts, no doubt, but it is not for these that they love the giver. Take the wealth of the world and lavish it with counterfeited affection: I will win all the children's hearts away from you by empty-handed love. The gorgeous toys will dazzle them for an hour; then their instincts will revert to their natural friends. In visiting a house where there are children I do not like to take them presents: it is better to forego the pleasure of the giving than to divide the welcome between yourself and the gift. Let that follow after you are gone.

It is an exaggerated compliment to women when we ascribe to them alone this natural sympathy with childhood. It is an individual, not a sexual trait, and is stronger in many men than in many women. It is nowhere better exhibited in literature than where the happy Wilhelm Meister takes his boy by the hand, to lead him "into the free and lordly world." Such love is not universal among the other sex, though men, in that humility which so adorns their natures, keep up the pleasing fiction that it is. As a general rule any little girl feels some glimmerings of emotion towards anything that can pass for a doll, but it does not follow that, when grown older, she will feel as ready an instinct toward every child. Try it. Point out to a woman some bundle of blue-and-white or white-and-scarlet in some one's arms at the next street corner. Ask her, "Do you love that baby?" Not one woman in three will say promptly, "Yes." The others will hesitate, will bid you wait till they are nearer, till they can personally inspect the little thing and take an inventory of its traits; it may be dirty, too; it may be diseased. Ah! but this is not to love children, and you might as well be a man. To love children is to love childhood, instinctively, at whatever distance, the first impulse being one of attraction, though it may be checked by later discoveries. Unless your heart commands at least as long a range as your eye, it is not worth much. The dearest saint in my calendar never entered a railway car that she did not look round for a baby, which, when discovered, must always be won at once into her arms. If it was dirty, she would have been glad to bathe it; if ill, to heal it. It would not have seemed to her anything worthy the name

of love, to seek only those who were wholesome and clean. Like the young girl in Holmes's most touching poem, she would have claimed as her own the outcast child whom nurses and physicians had abandoned.

"'Take her, dread Angel! Break in love This bruised reed and make it thine!' No voice descended from above, But Avis answered, 'She is mine!'"

When I think of the self-devotion which the human heart can contain—of those saintly souls that are in love with sorrow, and that yearn to shelter all weakness and all grief—it inspires an unspeakable confidence that there must also be an instinct of parentage beyond this human race, a heart of hearts, cor cordium. As we all crave something to protect, so we long to feel ourselves protected. We are all infants before the Infinite; and as I turned from that cottage window to the resplendent sky, it was easy to fancy that mute embrace, that shadowy symbol of affection, expanding from the narrow lattice till it touched the stars, gathering every created soul into the armsof Immortal Love.

FOOTPATHS.

All round the shores of the island where I dwell there runs a winding path. It is probably as old as the settlement of the country, and has been kept open with pertinacious fidelity by the fishermen whose right of way it represents. In some places, as between Fort Adams and Castle Hill, it exists in its primitive form, an irregular track above rough cliffs, whence you look down upon the entrance to the harbor and watch the white-sailed schooners that glide beneath. Elsewhere the high-road has usurped its place, and you have the privilege of the path without its charm. Along our eastern cliffs it runs for some miles in the rear of beautiful estates, whose owners have seized on it, and graded it, and gravelled it, and made stiles for it, and done for it everything that landscape-gardening could do, while leaving it a footpath still. You walk there with croquet and roses on the one side, and with

floating loons and wild ducks on the other. In remoter places the path grows wilder, and has ramifications striking boldly across the peninsula through rough moorland and among great ledges of rock, where you may ramble for hours, out of sight of all but some sportsman with his gun, or some truant-boy with dripping water-lilies. There is always a charm to me in the inexplicable windings of these wayward tracks; yet I like the path best where it is nearest the ocean. There, while looking upon blue sea and snowy sails and floating gulls, you may yet hear on the landward side the melodious and plaintive drawl of the meadow-lark, most patient of summer visitors, and, indeed, lingering on this island almost the whole year round.

But who cares whither a footpath leads? The charm is in the path itself, its promise of something that the high-road cannot yield. Away from habitations, you know that the fisherman, the geologist, the botanist may have been there, or that the cows have been driven home and that somewhere there are bars and a milk-pail. Even in the midst of houses, the path suggests school-children with their luncheon-baskets, or workmen seeking eagerly the noonday interval or the twilight rest. A footpath cannot be quite spoiled, so long as it remains such; you can make a road a mere avenue for fast horses or showy women, but this humbler track keeps its simplicity, and if a queen comes walking through it, she comes but as a village maid. On Sunday, when it is not etiquette for our fashionables to drive, but only to walk along the cliffs, they seem to wear a more innocent and wholesome aspect in that novel position; I have seen a fine lady pause under such circumstances and pick a wild-flower; she knew how to do it. A footpath has its own character, while that of the high-road is imposed upon it by those who dwell beside it or pass over it; indeed, roads become picturesque only when they are called lanes and make believe that they are but paths.

The very irregularity of a footpath makes half its charm. So much of loitering and indolence and impulse have gone to its formation, that all which is stiff and military has been left out. I observed that the very dikes of the Southern rice plantations did

not succeed in being rectilinear, though the general effect was that of Tennyson's "flowery squares." Even the country road, which is but an enlarged footpath, is never quite straight, as Thoreau long since observed, noting it with his surveyor's eye. I read in his unpublished diary: "The law that plants the rushes in waving lines along the edge of a pond, and that curves the pond shore itself, incessantly beats against the straight fences and highways of men, and makes them conform to the line of beauty at last." It is this unintentional adaptation that makes a footpath so indestructible. Instead of striking across the natural lines, it conforms to them, nestles into the hollow, skirts the precipice, avoids the morass. An unconscious landscape-gardener, it seeks the most convenient course, never doubting that grace will follow. Mitchell, at his "Edgewood" farm, wishing to decide on the most picturesque avenue to his front door, ordered a heavy load of stone to be hauled across the field, and bade the driver seek the easiest grades, at whatever cost of curvature. The avenue followed the path so made.

When a footpath falls thus unobtrusively into its place, all natural forces seem to sympathize with it, and help it to fulfil its destiny. Once make a well-defined track through a wood, and presently the overflowing brooks seek it for a channel, the obstructed winds draw through it, the fox and woodchuck travel by it, the catbird and robin build near it, the bee and swallow make a high-road of its convenient thoroughfare. In winter the first snows mark it with a white line; as you wander through you hear the blue-jay's cry, and see the hurrying flight of the sparrow; the graceful outlines of the leafless bushes are revealed, and the clinging bird's-nests, "leaves that do not fall," give happy memories of summer homes. Thus Nature meets man half-way. The paths of the wild forest and of the rural neighborhood are not at all the same thing; indeed, a "spotted trail," marked only by the woodman's axe-marks on the trees, is not a footpath. Thoreau, who is sometimes foolishly accused of having sought to be a mere savage, understood this distinction well. "A man changes by his presence," he says in his unpublished diary, "the very nature of

the trees. The poet's is not a logger's path, but a woodman's,—the logger and pioneer have preceded him, and banished decaying wood and the spongy mosses which feed on it, and built hearths and humanized nature for him. For a permanent residence, there can be no comparison between this and the wilderness. Our woods are sylvan, and their inhabitants woodsmen and rustics; that is, a selvaggia and its inhabitants salvages." What Thoreau loved, like all men of healthy minds, was the occasional experience of untamed wildness. "I love to see occasionally," he adds, "a man from whom the usnea (lichen) hangs as gracefully as from a spruce."

Footpaths bring us nearer both to nature and to man. No high-road, not even a lane, conducts to the deeper recesses of the wood, where you hear the wood-thrush. There are a thousand concealed fitnesses in nature, rhymed correspondences of bird and blossom, for which you must seek through hidden paths; as when you come upon some black brook so palisaded with cardinal-flowers as to seem "a stream of sunsets"; or trace its shadowy course till it spreads into some forest-pool, above which that rare and patrician insect, the Agrion dragon-fly, flits and hovers perpetually, as if the darkness and the cool had taken wings. The dark brown pellucid water sleeps between banks of softest moss; white stars of twin-flowers creep close to the brink, delicate sprays of dewberry trail over it, and the emerald tips of drooping leaves forever tantalize the still surface. Above these the slender, dark-blue insect waves his dusky wings, like a liberated ripple of the brook, and takes the few stray sunbeams on his lustrous form. Whence came the correspondence between this beautiful shy creature and the moist, dark nooks, shot through with stray and transitory sunlight, where it dwells? The analogy is as unmistakable as that between the scorching heats of summer and the shrill cry of the cicada. They suggest questions that no savant can answer, mysteries that wait, like Goethe's secret of morphology, till a sufficient poet can be born. And we, meanwhile, stand helpless in their presence, as one waits beside the telegraphic wire, while it hums and vibrates, charged with all fascinating secrets, above the heads of a

wondering world.

It is by the presence of pathways on the earth that we know it to be the habitation of man; in the barest desert, they open to us a common humanity. It is the absence of these that renders us so lonely on the ocean, and makes us glad to watch even the track of our own vessel. But on the mountain-top, how eagerly we trace out the "road that brings places together," as Schiller says. It is the first thing we look for; till we have found it, each scattered village has an isolated and churlish look, but the glimpse of a furlong of road puts them all in friendly relations. The narrower the path, the more domestic and familiar it seems.

The railroad may represent the capitalist or the government; the high-road indicates what the surveyor or the county commissioners thought best; but the footpath shows what the people needed. Its associations are with beauty and humble life,—the boy with his dog, the little girl with her fagots, the pedler with his pack; cheery companions they are or ought to be.

"Jog on, jog on the footpath way, And merrily hent the stile-a: A merry heart goes all the day, Your sad one tires in a mile-a."

The footpath takes you across the farms and behind the houses; you are admitted to the family secrets and form a personal acquaintance. Even if you take the wrong path, it only leads you "across-lots" to some man ploughing, or some old woman picking berries,—perhaps a very spicy acquaintance, whom the road would never have brought to light. If you are led astray in the woods, that only teaches you to observe landmarks more closely, or to leave straws and stakes for tokens, like a gypsy's patteran, to show the ways already traversed. There is a healthy vigor in the mind of the boy who would like of all things to be lost in the woods, to build a fire out of doors, and sleep under a tree or in a haystack. Civilization is tiresome and enfeebling, unless we occasionally give it the relish of a little outlawry, and approach, in imagination at least, the zest of a gypsy life. The records of pedestrian

journeys, the Wanderjahre and memoirs of good-for-noth-ings, and all the delightful German forest literature,—these belong to the footpath side of our nature. The passage I best remember in all Bayard Taylor's travels is the ecstasy of his Thuringian forester, who said: "I recall the time when just a sunny morning made me so happy that I did not know what to do with myself. One day in spring, as I went through the woods and saw the shadows of the young leaves upon the moss, and smelt the buds of the firs and larches, and thought to myself, 'All thy life is to be spent in the splendid forest,'I actually threw myself down and rolled in the grass like a dog, over and over, crazy with joy."

It is the charm of pedestrian journeys that they convert the grandest avenues to footpaths. Through them alone we gain intimate knowledge of the people, and of nature, and indeed of ourselves. It is easy to hurry too fast for our best reflections, which, as the old monk said of perfection, must be sought not by flying, but by walking, "Perfectionis via non pervolanda sed perambulanda." The thoughts that the railway affords us are dusty thoughts; we ask the news, read the journals, question our neighbor, and wish to know what is going on because we are a part of it. It is only in the footpath that our minds, like our bodies, move slowly, and we traverse thought, like space, with a patient thoroughness. Rousseau said that he had never experienced so much, lived so truly, and been so wholly himself, as during his travels on foot.

What can Hawthorne mean by saying in his English diary that "an American would never understand the passage in Bunyan about Christian and Hopeful going astray along a by-path into the grounds of Giant Despair, from there being no stiles and by-paths in our country"? So much of the charm of American pedestrianism lies in the by-paths! For instance, the whole interior of Cape Ann, beyond Gloucester, is a continuous woodland, with granite ledges everywhere cropping out, around which the high-road winds, following the curving and indented line of the sea, and dotted here and there with fishing hamlets. This whole interior is traversed by a network of

footpaths, rarely passable for a wagon, and not always for a horse, but enabling the pedestrian to go from any one of these villages to any other, in a line almost direct, and always under an agreeable shade. By the longest of these hidden ways, one may go from Pigeon Cove to Gloucester, ten miles, without seeing a public road. In the little inn at the former village there used to hang an old map of this whole forest region, giving a chart of some of these paths, which were said to date back to the first settlement of the country. One of them, for instance, was called on the map "Old Road from Sandy Bay to Squam Meeting-house through the Woods"; but the road is now scarcely even a bridle-path, and the most faithful worshipper could not seek Squam Meeting-house in the family chaise. Those woods have been lately devastated; but when I first knew that region, it was as good as any German forest.

Often we stepped almost from the edge of the sea into some gap in the woods; there seemed hardly more than a rabbit-track, yet presently we met some wayfarer who had crossed the Cape by it. A piny dell gave some vista of the broad sea we were leaving, and an opening in the woods displayed another blue sea-line before; the encountering breezes interchanged odor of berry-bush and scent of brine; penetrating farther among oaks and chestnuts, we came upon some little cottage, quaint and sheltered as any Spenser drew; it was built on no high-road, and turned its vine-clad gable away from even the footpath.

Then the ground rose and we were surprised by a breeze from a new quarter; perhaps we climbed trees to look for landmarks, and saw only, still farther in the woods, some great cliff of granite or the derrick of an unseen quarry. Three miles inland, as I remember, we found the hearthstones of a vanished settlement; then we passed a swamp with cardinal-flowers; then a cathedral of noble pines, topped with crow's-nests. If we had not gone astray by this time, we presently emerged on Dogtown Common, an elevated table-land, over-spread with great boulders as with houses, and encircled with a girdle of green woods and an outer girdle of blue sea. I know of nothing more wild than that gray waste of boulders; it is a natural Salisbury

Plain, of which icebergs and ocean-currents were the Druidic builders; in that multitude of couchant monsters there seems a sense of suspended life; you feel as if they must speak and answer to each other in the silent nights, but by day only the wandering sea-birds seek them, on their way across the Cape, and the sweet-bay and green fern embed them in a softer and deeper setting as the years go by. This is the "height of ground" of that wild footpath; but as you recede farther from the outer ocean and approach Gloucester, you come among still wilder ledges, unsafe without a guide, and you find in one place a cluster of deserted houses, too difficult of access to remove even their materials, so that they are left to moulder alone. I used to wander in those woods, summer after summer, till I had made my own chart of their devious tracks, and now when I close my eyes in this Oldport midsummer, the soft Italian air takes on something of a Scandinavian vigor; for the incessant roll of carriages I hear the tinkle of the quarryman's hammer and the veery's song; and I long for those perfumed and breezy pastures, and for those promontories of granite where the fresh water is nectar and the salt sea has a regal blue.

I recall another footpath near Worcester, Massachusetts; it leads up from the low meadows into the wildest region of all that vicinity, Tatesset Hill. Leaving behind you the open pastures where the cattle lie beneath the chestnut-trees or drink from the shallow brook, you pass among the birches and maples, where the woodsman's shanty stands in the clearing, and the raspberry-fields are merry with children's voices. The familiar birds and butterflies linger below with them, and in the upper and more sacred depths the wood-thrush chants his litany and the brown mountain butterflies hover among the scented vines. Higher yet rises the "Rattlesnake Ledge," spreading over one side of the summit a black avalanche of broken rock, now overgrown with reindeer-moss and filled with tufts of the smaller wild geranium. Just below this ledge,—amid a dark, dense track of second-growth forest, masked here and there with grape-vines, studded with rare orchises, and pierced by a brook that vanishes suddenly where the ground sinks away and lets the blue distance

in,—there is a little monument to which the footpath leads, and which always seemed to me as wild a memorial of forgotten superstition as the traveller can find amid the forests of Japan.

It was erected by a man called Solomon Pearson (not to give his name too closely), a quiet, thoughtful farmer, long-bearded, low-voiced, and with that aspect of refinement which an ideal life brings forth even in quite uninstructed men. At the height of the "Second Advent" excitement this man resolved to build for himself upon these remote rocks a house which should escape the wrath to come, and should endure even amid a burning and transformed earth. Thinking, as he had once said to me, that, "if the First Dispensation had been strong enough to endure, there would have been no need of a Second," he resolved to build for his part something which should possess permanence at least. And there still remains on that high hillside the small beginning that he made.

There are four low stone walls, three feet thick, built solidly together without cement, and without the trace of tools. The end-walls are nine feet high (the sides being lower) and are firmly united by a strong iron ridge-pole, perhaps fifteen feet long, which is imbedded at each end in the stone. Other masses of iron lie around unused, in sheets, bars, and coils, brought with slow labor by the builder from far below. The whole building was designed to be made of stone and iron. It is now covered with creeping vines and the debris of the hillside; but though its construction had been long discontinued when I saw it, the interior was still kept scrupulously clean through the care of this modern Solomon, who often visited his shrine.

An arch in the terminal wall admits the visitor to the small roofless temple, and he sees before him, imbedded in the centre of the floor, a large smooth block of white marble, where the deed of this spot of land was to be recorded, in the hope to preserve it even after the globe should have been burned and renewed. But not a

stroke of this inscription was ever cut, and now the young chestnut boughs droop into the uncovered interior, and shy forest-birds sing fearlessly among them, having learned that this house belongs to God, not man. As if to reassure them, and perhaps in allusion to his own vegetarian habits, the architect has spread some rough plaster at the head of the apartment and marked on it in bold characters, "Thou shalt not kill." Two slabs outside, a little way from the walls, bear these inscriptions, "Peace on Earth," "Good-Will to Men." When I visited it, the path was rough and so obstructed with bushes that it was hard to comprehend how it had afforded passage for these various materials; it seemed more as if some strange architectural boulder had drifted from some Runic period and been stranded there. It was as apt a confessional as any of Wordsworth's nooks among the Trossachs; and when one thinks how many men are wearing out their souls in trying to conform to the traditional mythologies of others, it seems nobler in this man to have reared upon that lonely hill the unfinished memorial of his own.

I recall another path which leads from the Lower Saranac Lake, near "Martin's," to what the guides call, or used to call, "The Philosopher's Camp" at Amperzand. On this oddly named lake, in the Adirondack region, a tract of land was bought by Professor Agassiz and his friends, who made there a summer camping-ground, and with one comrade I once sought the spot. I remember with what joy we left the boat,—so delightful at first, so fatiguing at last; for I cannot, with Mr. Murray, call it a merit in the Adirondacks that you never have to walk,—and stepped away into the free forest. We passed tangled swamps, so dense with upturned trees and trailing mosses that they seemed to give no opening for any living thing to pass, unless it might be the soft and silent owl that turned its head almost to dislocation in watching us, ere it flitted vaguely away. Farther on, the deep, cool forest was luxurious with plumy ferns; we trod on moss-covered roots, finding the emerald steps so soft we scarcely knew that we were ascending; every breath was aromatic; there seemed infinite healing in every fragrant drop that fell upon our necks from the

cedar boughs. We had what I think the pleasantest guide for a daylight tramp,—one who has never before passed over that particular route, and can only pilot you on general principles till he gladly, at last, allows you to pilot him. When we once got the lead we took him jubilantly on, and beginning to look for "The Philosopher's Camp," found ourselves confronted by a large cedar-tree on the margin of a wooded lake. This was plainly the end of the path. Was the camp then afloat? Our escort was in that state of hopeless ignorance of which only lost guides are capable. We scanned the green horizon and the level water, without glimpse of human abode. It seemed an enchanted lake, and we looked about the tree-trunk for some fairy horn, that we might blow it. That failing, we tried three rifle-shots, and out from the shadow of an island, on the instant, there glided a boat, which bore no lady of the lake, but a red-shirted woodsman. The artist whom we sought was on that very island, it seemed, sketching patiently while his guides were driving the deer.

This artist was he whose "Procession of the Pines" had identified his fame with that delightful forest region. He it was who had laid out with artistic taste "The Philosopher's Camp," and who was that season still awaiting philosophers as well as deer. He had been there for a month, alone with the guides, and declared that Nature was pressing upon him to an extent that almost drove him wild. His eyes had a certain remote and questioning look that belongs to imaginative men who dwell alone. It seemed an impertinence to ask him to come out of his dream and offer us dinner; but his instincts of hospitality failed not, and the red-shirted guide was sent to the camp, which was, it seemed, on the other side of the lake, to prepare our meal, while we bathed. I am thus particular in speaking of the dinner, not only because such is the custom of travellers, but also because it was the occasion of an interlude which I shall never forget. As we were undressing for our bath upon the lonely island, where the soft, pale water almost lapped our feet, and the deep, wooded hills made a great amphitheatre for the lake, our host bethought himself of something neglected in his instructions.

"Ben!" vociferated he to the guide, now rapidly receding. Ben paused on his oars.

"Remember to bo-o-oil the venison, Ben!" shouted the pensive artist, while all the slumbering echoes arose to applaud this culinary confidence.

"And, Ben!" he added, imploringly, "don't forget the dumplings!" Upon this, the loons, all down the lake, who had hitherto been silent, took up the strain with vehemence, hurling their wild laughter at the presumptuous mortal who thus dared to invade their solitudes with details as trivial as Mr. Pickwick's tomato-sauce. They repeated it over and over to each other, till ten square miles of loons must have heard the news, and all laughed together; never was there such an audience; they could not get over it, and two hours after, when we had rowed over to the camp and dinner had been served, this irreverent and invisible chorus kept bursting out, at all points of the compass, with scattered chuckles of delight over this extraordinary bill of fare. Justice compels me to add that the dumplings were made of Indian-meal, upon a recipe devised by our artist; the guests preferred the venison, but the host showed a fidelity to his invention that proved him to be indeed a dweller in an ideal world.

Another path that comes back to memory is the bare trail that we followed over the prairies of Nebraska, in 1856, when the Missouri River was held by roving bands from the Slave States, and Freedom had to seek an overland route into Kansas. All day and all night we rode between distant prairie-fires, pillars of evening light and of morning cloud, while sometimes the low grass would burn to the very edge of the trail, so that we had to hold our breath as we galloped through. Parties of armed Missourians were sometimes seen over the prairie swells, so that we had to mount guard at nightfall; Free-State emigrants, fleeing from persecution, continually met us; and we sometimes saw parties of wandering Sioux, or passed their great irregular huts and houses of worship. I remember one desolate prairie summit on which an Indian boy sat motionless on horseback; his bare red legs clung closely to the white

sides of his horse; a gorgeous sunset was unrolled behind him, and he might have seemed the last of his race, just departing for the hunting-grounds of the blest. More often the horizon showed no human outline, and the sun set cloudless, and elongated into pear-shaped outlines, as behind ocean-waves. But I remember best the excitement that filled our breasts when we approached spots where the contest for a free soil had already been sealed with blood. In those days, as one went to Pennsylvania to study coal formations, or to Lake Superior for copper, so one went to Kansas for men. "Every footpath on this planet," said a rare thinker, "may lead to the door of a hero," and that trail into Kansas ended rightly at the tent-door of John Brown.

And later, who that knew them can forget the picket-paths that were worn throughout the Sea Islands of South Carolina,—paths that wound along the shores of creeks or through the depths of woods, where the great wild roses tossed their airy festoons above your head, and the brilliant lizards glanced across your track, and your horse's ears suddenly pointed forward and his pace grew uneasy as he snuffed the presence of something you could not see. At night you had often to ride from picket to picket in dense darkness, trusting to the horse to find his way, or sometimes dismounting to feel with your hands for the track, while the great Southern fire-flies offered their floating lanterns for guidance, and the hoarse "Chuck-will's-widow" croaked ominously from the trees, and the great guns of the siege of Charleston throbbed more faintly than the drumming of a partridge, far away. Those islands are everywhere so intersected by dikes and ledges and winding creeks as to form a natural military region, like La Vendee and yet two plantations that are twenty miles asunder by the road will sometimes be united by a footpath which a negro can traverse in two hours. These tracks are limited in distance by the island formation, but they assume a greater importance as you penetrate the mainland; they then join great States instead of mere plantations, and if you ask whither one of them leads, you are told "To Alabama," or "To Tennessee."

Time would fail to tell of that wandering path which leads to the Mine Mountain near Brattleborough, where you climb the high peak at last, and perhaps see the showers come up the Connecticut till they patter on the leaves beneath you, and then, swerving, pass up the black ravine and leave you unwet. Or of those among the White Mountains, gorgeous with great red lilies which presently seem to take flight in a cloud of butterflies that match their tints,—paths where the balsamic air caresses you in light breezes, and masses of alder-berries rise above the waving ferns. Or of the paths that lead beside many a little New England stream, whose bank is lost to sight in a smooth green slope of grape-vine: the lower shoots rest upon the quiet water, but the upper masses are crowned by a white wreath of alder-blooms; beside them grow great masses of wild-roses, and the simultaneous blossoms and berries of the gaudy nightshade. Or of those winding tracks that lead here and there among the flat stones of peaceful old graveyards, so entwined with grass and flowers that every spray of sweetbrier seems to tell more of life than all the accumulated epitaphs can tell of death.

And when the paths that one has personally traversed are exhausted, memory holds almost as clearly those which the poets have trodden for us,—those innumerable by-ways of Shakespeare, each more real than any high-road in England; or Chaucer's

"Little path I found Of mintes full and fennell greene";

or Spenser's

"Pathes and alleies wide With footing worne";

or the path of Browning's "Pippa"

"Down the hillside, up the glen, Love me as I love!"

or the weary tracks by which "Little Nell" wandered; or the haunted way in Sydney Dobell's ballad,

"Ravelstone, Ravelstone, The merry path that leads Down the golden morning hills,

And through the silver meads";

or the few American paths that genius has yet idealized; that where Hawthorne's "David Swan" slept, or that which Thoreau found upon the banks of Walden Pond, or where Whittier parted with his childhood's playmate on Ramoth Hill. It is not heights, or depths, or spaces that make the world worth living in; for the fairest landscape needs still to be garlanded by the imagination,—to become classic with noble deeds and romantic with dreams.

Go where we please in nature, we receive in proportion as we give. Ivo, the old Bishop of Chartres, wrote, that "neither the secret depth of woods nor the tops of mountains make man blessed, if he has not with him solitude of mind, the sabbath of the heart, and tranquillity of conscience." There are many roads, but one termination; and Plato says, in his "Republic," that the point where all paths meet is the soul's true resting-place and the journey's end.

The End.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OLDPORT DAYS ***

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