

A Landscape Painter

Henry James

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Do you remember how, a dozen years ago, a number of our friends were startled by the report of the rupture of young Locksley's engagement with Miss Leary? This event made some noise in its day. Both parties possessed certain claims to distinction: Locksley in his wealth, which was believed to be enormous, and the young lady in her beauty, which was in truth very great. I used to hear that her lover was fond of comparing her to the Venus of Milo; and, indeed, if you can imagine the mutilated goddess with her full complement of limbs, dressed out by Madame de Crinoline, and engaged in small talk beneath the drawing-room chandelier, you may obtain a vague notion of Miss Josephine Leary. Locksley, you remember, was rather a short man, dark, and not particularly good-looking; and when he walked about with his betrothed, it was half a matter of surprise that he should have ventured to propose to a young lady of such heroic proportions. Miss Leary had the gray eyes and auburn hair which I have always assigned to the famous statue. The one defect in her face, in spite of an expression of great candor and sweetness, was a certain lack of animation. What it was besides her beauty that attracted Locksley I never discovered: perhaps, since his attachment was so short-lived, it was her beauty alone. I say that his attachment was of brief duration, because the rupture was understood to have come from him. Both he and Miss Leary very wisely held their tongues on the matter; but among their friends and enemies it of course received a hundred explanations. That most popular with Locksley's well-wishers was, that he had backed out (these events are discussed, you know, in fashionable circles very much as an expected prize-fight which has miscarried is canvassed in reunions of another kind) only on flagrant evidence of the lady's what, faithlessness? on overwhelming proof of the most mercenary spirit on the part of Miss Leary. You see, our friend was held capable of doing battle for an "idea." It must be owned that this was a novel charge; but, for myself, having long known Mrs. Leary, the mother, who was a widow with four daughters, to be an inveterate old screw, I took the liberty of accrediting the existence of a similar propensity in her eldest born. I suppose that the young lady's family had, on their own side, a very plausible version of their disappointment. It was, however, soon made up to them by Josephine's marriage with a gentleman of expectations very nearly as brilliant as those of her old suitor. And what was his compensation? That is precisely my story.

Locksley disappeared, as you will remember, from public view. The events above alluded to happened in March. On calling at his lodgings in April, I was told he had gone to the "country." But towards the last of May I met him. He told me that he was on the look-out for a quiet, unfrequented place on the sea-shore, where he might rusticate and sketch. He was looking very poorly. I suggested Newport, and I remember he hardly had the energy to smile at the simple joke. We parted without my having been able to satisfy him, and for a very long time I quite lost sight of him. He died seven years ago, at the age of thirty-five. For five years, accordingly, he managed to shield his life from the eyes of men. Through circumstances which I need not detail, a large portion of his personal property has come into my hands. You will remember that he was a man of what are called elegant tastes: that is, he was seriously interested in arts and letters. He wrote some very bad poetry, but he produced a number of remarkable paintings. He left a mass of papers on all subjects, few of which are adapted to be generally interesting. A portion of them, however, I highly prize, that which constitutes his private diary. It extends from his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year, at which period it breaks off suddenly. If you will come to my house, I will show you such of his pictures and sketches as I possess, and, I trust, convert you to my opinion that he had in him the stuff of a great painter. Meanwhile I will

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place before you the last hundred pages of his diary, as an answer to your inquiry regarding the ultimate view taken by the great Nemesis of his treatment of Miss Leary, his scorn of the magnificent Venus Victrix. The recent decease of the one person who had a voice paramount to mine in the disposal of Locksley's effects enables me to act without reserve.

Cragthorpe, June 9th. I have been sitting some minutes, pen in hand, pondering whether on this new earth, beneath this new sky, I had better resume these occasional records of my idleness. I think I will at all events make the experiment. If we fail, as Lady Macbeth remarks, we fail. I find my entries have been longest when my life has been duller. I doubt not, therefore, that, once launched into the monotony of village life, I shall sit scribbling from morning till night. If nothing happens—But my prophetic soul tells me that something will happen. I am determined that something shall,—if it be nothing else than that I paint a picture.

When I came up to bed half an hour ago, I was deadly sleepy. Now, after looking out of the window a little while, my brain is strong and clear, and I feel as if I could write till morning. But, unfortunately, I have nothing to write about. And then, if I expect to rise early, I must turn in betimes. The whole village is asleep, godless metropolitan that I am! The lamps on the square without flicker in the wind; there is nothing abroad but the blue darkness and the smell of the rising tide. I have spent the whole day on my legs, trudging from one side of the peninsula to the other. What a trump is old Mrs. M., to have thought of this place! I must write her a letter of passionate thanks. Never before, it seems to me, have I known pure coast-scenery. Never before have I relished the beauties of wave, rock, and cloud. I am filled with a sensuous ecstasy at the unparalleled life, light, and transparency of the air. I am stricken mute with reverent admiration at the stupendous resources possessed by the ocean in the way of color and sound; and as yet, I suppose, I have not seen half of them. I came in to supper hungry, weary, footsore, sunburnt, dirty, happier, in short, than I have been for a twelvemonth. And now for the victories of the brush!

June 11th. Another day afoot and also afloat. I resolved this morning to leave this abominable little tavern. I can't stand my feather-bed another night. I determined to find some other prospect than the town-pump and the "drug-store." I questioned my host, after breakfast, as to the possibility of getting lodgings in any of the outlying farms and cottages. But my host either did not or would not know anything about the matter. So I resolved to wander forth and seek my fortune, to roam inquisitive through the neighborhood, and appeal to the indigenous sentiment of hospitality. But never did I see a folk so devoid of this amiable quality. By dinner-time I had given up in despair. After dinner I strolled down to the harbor, which is close at hand. The brightness and breeziness of the water tempted me to hire a boat and resume my explorations. I procured an old tub, with a short stump of a mast, which, being planted quite in the centre, gave the craft much the appearance of an inverted mushroom. I made for what I took to be, and what is, an island, lying long and low, some three or four miles, over against the town. I sailed for half an hour directly before the wind, and at last found myself aground on the shelving beach of a quiet little cove. Such a little cove! So bright, so still, so warm, so remote from the town, which lay off in the distance, white and semicircular! I leaped ashore, and dropped my anchor. Before me rose a steep cliff, crowned with an old ruined fort or tower. I made my way up, and about to the landward entrance. The fort is a hollow old shell. Looking upward from the beach, you see the harmless blue sky through the gaping loopholes. Its interior is choked with rocks and brambles, and masses of fallen masonry. I scrambled up to the parapet, and obtained a noble sea-view. Beyond the broad bay I saw miniature town and country mapped out before me; and on the other hand, I saw the infinite Atlantic, over which, by the by, all the pretty things are brought from Paris. I spent the whole afternoon in wandering hither and thither over the hills that encircle the little cove in which I had landed, heedless of the minutes and my steps, watching the sailing clouds and the cloudy sails on the horizon, listening to the musical attrition of the tidal pebbles, killing innocuous suckers. The only particular sensation I remember was that of being ten years old again, together with a general impression of Saturday afternoon, of the liberty to go in wading or even swimming, and of the prospect of limping home in the dusk with a wondrous story of having almost caught a turtle. When I returned, I found—but I know very well what I found, and I need hardly repeat it here for my mortification. Heaven knows I never was a practical character. What thought I about the tide? There lay the old tub, high and dry, with the rusty anchor protruding from the flat green stones and the shallow puddles left by the receding wave. Moving the boat an inch, much more a dozen yards, was quite beyond my strength. I

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slowly reascended the cliff, to see if from its summit any help was discernible. None was within sight; and I was about to go down again in profound dejection, when I saw a trim little sail-boat shoot out from behind a neighboring bluff, and advance along the shore. I quickened pace. On reaching the beach, I found the newcomer standing out about a hundred yards. The man at the helm appeared to regard me with some interest. With a mute prayer that his feeling might be akin to compassion, I invited him by voice and gesture to make for a little point of rocks a short distance above us, where I proceeded to join him. I told him my story, and he readily took me aboard. He was a civil old gentleman, of the seafaring sort, who appeared to be cruising about in the evening breeze for his pleasure. On landing, I visited the proprietor of my old tub, related my misadventure, and offered to pay damages, if the boat shall turn out in the morning to have sustained any. Meanwhile, I suppose, it is held secure against the next tidal revolution, however insidious.—But for my old gentleman. I have decidedly picked up an acquaintance, if not made a friend. I gave him a very good cigar; and before we reached home, we had become thoroughly intimate. In exchange for my cigar, he gave me his name; and there was that in his tone which seemed to imply that I had by no means the worst of the bargain. His name is Richard Blunt, "though most people," he added, "call me Captain, for short." He then proceeded to inquire my own titles and pretensions. I told him no lies, but I told him only half the truth; and if he chooses to indulge mentally in any romantic understatements, why, he is welcome, and bless his simple heart! The fact is, that I have broken with the past. I have decided, coolly and calmly, as I believe, that it is necessary to my success, or, at any rate, to my happiness, to abjure for a while my conventional self, and to assume a simple, natural character. How can a man be simple and natural who is known to have a hundred thousand a year? That is the supreme curse. It's bad enough to have it: to be known to have it, to be known only because you have it, is most damnable. I suppose I am too proud to be successfully rich. Let me see how poverty will serve my turn. I have taken a fresh start. I have determined to stand upon my own merits. If they fail me, I shall fall back upon my millions; but with God's help I will test them, and see what kind of stuff I am made of. To be young, to be strong, to be poor, such, in this blessed nineteenth century, is the great basis of solid success. I have resolved to take at least one brief draught from the pure founts of inspiration of my time. I replied to the Captain with such reservations as a brief survey of these principles dictated. What a luxury to pass in a poor man's mind for his brother! I begin to respect myself. Thus much the Captain knows: that I am an educated man, with a taste for painting; that I have come hither for the purpose of cultivating this taste by the study of coast scenery, and for my health. I have reason to believe, moreover, that he suspects me of limited means and of being a good deal of an economist. Amen! *Vogue la galere!* But the point of my story is in his very hospitable offer of lodgings. I had been telling him of my ill success of the morning in the pursuit of the same. He is an odd union of the gentleman of the old school and the old-fashioned, hot-headed merchant-captain. I suppose that certain traits in these characters are readily convertible.

"Young man," said he, after taking several meditative puffs of his cigar, "I don't see the point of your living in a tavern, when there are folks about you with more house-room than they know what to do with. A tavern is only half a house, just as one of these new-fashioned screw-propellers is only half a ship. Suppose you walk round and take a look at my place. I own quite a respectable house over yonder to the left of the town. Do you see that old wharf with the tumble-down warehouses, and the long row of elms behind it? I live right in the midst of the elms. We have the dearest little garden in the world, stretching down to the water's edge. It's all as quiet as anything can be, short of a graveyard. The back windows, you know, overlook the harbor; and you can see twenty miles up the bay, and fifty miles out to sea. You can paint to yourself there the livelong day, with no more fear of intrusion than if you were out yonder at the light-ship. There's no one but myself and my daughter, who's a perfect lady, Sir. She teaches music in a young ladies' school. You see, money's an object, as they say. We have never taken boarders yet, because none ever came in our track; but I guess we can learn the ways. I suppose you've boarded before; you can put us up to a thing or two."

There was something so kindly and honest in the old man's weather-beaten face, something so friendly in his address, that I forthwith struck a bargain with him, subject to his daughter's approval. I am to have her answer tomorrow. This same daughter strikes me as rather a dark spot in the picture. Teacher in a young ladies' school,—probably the establishment of which Mrs. M spoke to me. I suppose she's over thirty. I think I know the species.

June 12th, A. M.—I have really nothing to do but to scribble. "Barkis is willing." Captain Blunt brought me word this morning that his daughter smiles propitious. I am to report this evening; but I shall send my slender

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baggage in an hour or two.

P.M. Here I am, housed. The house is less than a mile from the inn, and reached by a very pleasant road, skirting the harbor. At about six o'clock I presented myself. Captain Blunt had described the place. A very civil old negress admitted me, and ushered me into the garden, where I found my friends watering their flowers. The old man was in his house—coat and slippers. He gave me a cordial welcome. There is something delightfully easy in his manners,—and in Miss Blunt's, too, for that matter. She received me very nicely. The late Mrs. Blunt was probably a well-bred woman. As for Miss Blunt's being thirty, she is about twenty-four; she wore a fresh white dress, with a violet ribbon at her neck, and a rosebud in her button-hole,—or whatever corresponds thereto on the feminine bosom. I thought I discerned in this costume a vague intention of courtesy, of deference, of celebrating my arrival. I don't believe Miss Blunt wears white muslin every day. She shook hands with me, and made me a very frank little speech about her hospitality. "We have never had any inmates before," said she; "and we are consequently new to the business. I don't know what you expect. I hope you don't expect a great deal. You must ask for anything you want. If we can give it, we shall be very glad to do so; if we can't, I give you warning that we shall refuse outright." Bravo, Miss Blunt! The best of it is, that she is decidedly beautiful, and in the grand manner—tall, and rather plump. What is the orthodox description of a pretty girl?—white and red? Miss Blunt is not a pretty girl, she is a handsome woman. She leaves an impression of black and red; that is, she is a florid brunette. She has a great deal of wavy black hair, which encircles her head like a dusky glory, a smoky halo. Her eyebrows, too, are black, but her eyes themselves are of a rich blue gray, the color of those slate-cliffs which I saw yesterday, weltering under the tide. Her mouth, however, is her strong point. It is very large, and contains the finest row of teeth in all this weary world. Her smile is eminently intelligent. Her chin is full, and somewhat heavy. All this is a tolerable catalogue, but no picture. I have been tormenting my brain to discover whether it was her coloring or her form that impressed me most. Fruitless speculation! Seriously, I think it was neither; it was her movement. She walks a queen. It was the conscious poise of her head, the unconscious "hang" of her arms, the careless grace and dignity with which she lingered along the garden-path, smelling a red rose! She has very little to say, apparently; but when she speaks, it is to the point, and if the point suggests it, with a very sweet smile. Indeed, if she is not talkative, it is not from timidity. Is it from indifference? Time will elucidate this, as well as other matters. I cling to the hypothesis that she is amiable. She is, moreover, intelligent; she is probably quite reserved; and she is possibly very proud. She is, in short, a woman of character. There you are, Miss Blunt, at full length, emphatically the portrait of a lady. After tea, she gave us some music in the parlor. I confess that I was more taken with the picture of the dusky little room, lighted by the single candle on the piano, and by the effect of Miss Blunt's performance, than with its meaning. She appears to possess a very brilliant touch.

June 18th. I have now been here almost a week. I occupy two very pleasant rooms. My painting-room is a vast and rather bare apartment, with a very good southern light. I have decked it out with a few old prints and sketches, and have already grown very fond of it. When I had disposed my artistic odds and ends in as picturesque a fashion as possible, I called in my hosts. The Captain looked about silently for some moments, and then inquired hopefully if I had ever tried my hand at a ship. On learning that I had not yet got to ships, he relapsed into a deferential silence. His daughter smiled and questioned very graciously, and called everything beautiful and delightful; which rather disappointed me, as I had taken her to be a woman of some originality. She is rather a puzzle; or is she, indeed, a very commonplace person, and the fault in me, who am forever taking women to mean a great deal more than their Maker intended? Regarding Miss Blunt I have collected a few facts. She is not twenty-four, but twenty-seven years old. She has taught music ever since she was twenty, in a large boarding-school just out of the town, where she originally got her education. Her salary in this establishment, which is, I believe, a tolerably flourishing one, and the proceeds of a few additional lessons, constitute the chief revenues of the household. But Blunt fortunately owns his house, and his needs and habits are of the simplest kind. What does he or his daughter know of the great worldly theory of necessities, the great worldly scale of pleasures? Miss Blunt's only luxuries are a subscription to the circulating library, and an occasional walk on the beach, which, like one of Miss Bronte's heroines, she paces in company with an old Newfoundland dog. I am afraid she is sadly ignorant. She reads nothing but novels. I am bound to believe, however, that she has derived from the perusal of these works a certain practical science of her own. "I read all the novels I can get," she said yesterday; "but I only like the good ones. I do so like Zanoni, which I have just finished." I must set her to work at some of the masters. I should like some of those fretful New-York heiresses to see how this woman lives. I wish,

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too, that half a dozen of ces messieurs of the clubs might take a peep at the present way of life of their humble servant. We breakfast at eight o'clock. Immediately afterwards, Miss Blunt, in a shabby old bonnet and shawl, starts off to school. If the weather is fine, the Captain goes out a-fishing, and I am left to my own devices. Twice I have accompanied the old man. The second time I was lucky enough to catch a big bluefish, which we had for dinner. The Captain is an excellent specimen of the sturdy navigator, with his loose blue clothes, his ultra-divergent legs, his crisp white hair, and his jolly thick-skinned visage. He comes of a sea-faring English race. There is more or less of the ship's cabin in the general aspect of this antiquated house. I have heard the winds whistle about its walls, on two or three occasions, in true mid-ocean style. And then the illusion is heightened, somehow or other, by the extraordinary intensity of the light. My painting-room is a grand observatory of the clouds. I sit by the half-hour, watching them sail past my high, uncurtained windows. At the back part of the room, something tells you that they belong to an ocean sky; and there, in truth, as you draw nearer, you behold the vast, gray complement of sea. This quarter of the town is perfectly quiet. Human activity seems to have passed over it, never again to return, and to have left a kind of deposit of melancholy resignation. The streets are clean, bright, and airy; but this fact seems only to add to the intense sobriety. It implies that the unobstructed heavens are in the secret of their decline. There is something ghostly in the perpetual stillness. We frequently hear the rattling of the yards and the issuing of orders on the barks and schooners anchored out in the harbor.

June 28th. My experiment works far better than I had hoped. I am thoroughly at my ease; my peace of mind quite passeth understanding. I work diligently; I have none but pleasant thoughts. The past has almost lost its terrors. For a week now I have been out sketching daily. The Captain carries me to a certain point on the shore of the harbor, I disembark and strike across the fields to a spot where I have established a kind of rendezvous with a particular effect of rock and shadow, which has been tolerably faithful to its appointment. Here I set up my easel, and paint till sunset. Then I retrace my steps and meet the boat. I am in every way much encouraged. The horizon of my work grows perceptibly wider. And then I am inexpressibly happy in the conviction that I am not wholly unfit for a life of (moderate) labor and (comparative) privation. I am quite in love with my poverty, if I may call it so. As why should I not? At this rate I don't spend eight hundred a year.

July 12th. We have been having a week of bad weather: constant rain, night and day. This is certainly at once the brightest and the blackest spot in New England. The skies can smile, assuredly; but how they can frown! I have been painting rather languidly, and at a great disadvantage, at my window.....Through all this pouring and pattering, Miss Blunt sallies forth to her pupils. She envelops her beautiful head in a great woollen hood, her beautiful figure in a kind of feminine Mackintosh; her feet she puts into heavy clogs, and over the whole she balances a cotton umbrella. When she comes home, with the rain-drops glistening on her red cheeks and her dark lashes, her cloak bespattered with mud, and her hands red with the cool damp, she is a profoundly wholesome spectacle. I never fail to make her a very low bow, for which she repays me with an extraordinary smile. This working-day side of her character is what especially pleases me in Miss Blunt. This holy working-dress of loveliness and dignity sits upon her with the simplicity of an antique drapery. Little use has she for whalebones and furbelows. What a poetry there is, after all, in red hands! I kiss yours, Mademoiselle. I do so because you are self-helpful; because you earn your living; because you are honest, simple, and ignorant (for a sensible woman, that is); because you speak and act to the point; because, in short, you are so unlike—certain of your sisters.

July 16th. On Monday it cleared up generously. When I went to my window, on rising, I found sky and sea looking, for their brightness and freshness, like a clever English water-color. The ocean is of a deep purple blue; above it, the pure, bright sky looks pale, though it bends with an infinite depth over the inland horizon. Here and there on the dark breezy water gleams the white cap of a wave, or flaps the white cloak of a fishing-boat. I have been sketching sedulously; I have discovered, within a couple of miles walk, a large, lonely pond, set in quite a grand landscape of barren rocks and grassy slopes. At one extremity is a broad outlook on the open sea; at the other, deep buried in the foliage of an apple-orchard, stands an old haunted-looking farmhouse. To the west of the pond is a wide expanse of rock and grass, of beach and marsh. The sheep browse over it as upon a Highland moor. Except a few stunted firs and cedars, there is not a tree in sight. When I want shade, I seek it in the shelter of one of the great mossy boulders which upheave their scintillating shoulders to the sun, or of the long shallow dells where a tangle of blackberry-bushes hedges about a sky-reflecting pool. I have encamped over against a plain, brown hillside, which, with laborious patience, I am transferring to canvas; and as we have now had the same clear sky for several days, I have almost finished quite a satisfactory little study. I go forth immediately after

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breakfast. Miss Blunt furnishes me with a napkin full of bread and cold meat, which at the noonday hours, in my sunny solitude, within sight of the slumbering ocean, I voraciously convey to my lips with my discolored fingers. At seven o'clock I return to tea, at which repast we each tell the story of our day's work. For poor Miss Blunt, it is day after day the same story: a wearisome round of visits to the school, and to the houses of the mayor, the parson, the butcher, the baker, whose young ladies, of course, all receive instruction on the piano. But she doesn't complain, nor, indeed, does she look very weary. When she has put on a fresh calico dress for tea, and arranged her hair anew, and with these improvements flits about with that quiet hither and thither of her gentle footsteps, preparing our evening meal, peeping into the teapot, cutting the solid loaf,—or when, sitting down on the low door-step, she reads out select scraps from the evening paper,—or else, when, tea being over, she folds her arms, (an attitude which becomes her mightily,) and, still sitting on the door-step, gossips away the evening in comfortable idleness, while her father and I indulge in the fragrant pipe, and watch the lights shining out, one by one, in different quarters of the darkling bay: at these moments she is as pretty, as cheerful, as careless as it becomes a sensible woman to be. What a pride the Captain takes in his daughter! And she, in return, how perfect is her devotion to the old man! He is proud of her grace, of her tact, of her good sense, of her wit, such as it is. He thinks her to be the most accomplished of women. He waits upon her as if, instead of his old familiar Esther, she were a newly inducted daughter-in-law. And indeed, if I were his own son, he could not be kinder to me. They are certainly—nay, why should I not say it?—we are certainly a very happy little household. Will it last forever? I say we, because both father and daughter have given me a hundred assurances—he direct, and she, if I don't flatter myself, after the manner of her sex, indirect—that I am already a valued friend. It is natural enough that I should have gained their goodwill. They have received at my hands inveterate courtesy. The way to the old man's heart is through a studied consideration of his daughter. He knows, I imagine, that I admire Miss Blunt. But if I should at any time fall below the mark of ceremony, I should have an account to settle with him. All this is as it should be. When people have to economize with the dollars and cents, they have a right to be splendid in their feelings. I have prided myself not a little on my good manners towards my hostess. That my bearing has been without reproach is, however, a fact which I do not, in any degree, set down here to my credit; for I would defy the most impertinent of men (whoever he is) to forget himself with this young lady, without leave unmistakably given. Those deep, dark eyes have a strong prohibitory force. I record the circumstance simply because in future years, when my charming friend shall have become a distant shadow, it will be pleasant, in turning over these pages, to find written testimony to a number of points which I shall be apt to charge solely upon my imagination. I wonder whether Miss Blunt, in days to come, referring to the tables of her memory for some trivial matter-of-fact, some prosaic date or half-buried landmark, will also encounter this little secret of ours, as I may call it, will decipher an old faint note to this effect, overlaid with the memoranda of intervening years. Of course she will. Sentiment aside, she is a woman of an excellent memory. Whether she forgives or not I know not; but she certainly doesn't forget. Doubtless, virtue is its own reward; but there is a double satisfaction in being polite to a person on whom it tells. Another reason for my pleasant relations with the Captain is, that I afford him a chance to rub up his rusty old cosmopolitanism, and trot out his little scraps of old-fashioned reading, some of which are very curious. It is a great treat for him to spin his threadbare yarns over again to a sympathetic listener. These warm July evenings, in the sweet-smelling garden, are just the proper setting for his amiable garrulities. An odd enough relation subsists between us on this point. Like many gentlemen of his calling, the Captain is harassed by an irresistible desire to romance, even on the least promising themes; and it is vastly amusing to observe how he will auscultate, as it were, his auditor's inmost mood, to ascertain whether it is prepared for the absorption of his insidious fibs. Sometimes they perish utterly in the transition: they are very pretty, I conceive, in the deep and briny well of the Captain's fancy; but they won't bear being transplanted into the shallow inland lakes of my land-bred apprehension. At other times, the auditor being in a dreamy, sentimental, and altogether unprincipled mood, he will drink the old man's salt-water by the bucketful and feel none the worse for it. Which is the worse, wilfully to tell, or wilfully to believe, a pretty little falsehood which will not hurt any one? I suppose you can't believe wilfully; you only pretend to believe. My part of the game, therefore, is certainly as bad as the Captain's. Perhaps I take kindly to his beautiful perversions of fact, because I am myself engaged in one, because I am sailing under false colors of the deepest dye. I wonder whether my friends have any suspicion of the real state of the case. How should they? I fancy, that, on the whole, I play my part pretty well. I am delighted to find it come so easy. I do not mean that I experience little difficulty in foregoing my hundred petty elegancies and

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luxuries,—for to these, thank Heaven, I was not so indissolubly wedded that one wholesome shock could not loosen my bonds,—but that I manage more cleverly than I expected to stifle those innumerable tacit allusions which might serve effectually to belie my character.

Sunday, July 20th. This has been a very pleasant day for me; although in it, of course, I have done no manner of work. I had this morning a delightful tete-a-tete with my hostess. She had sprained her ankle, coming down stairs; and so, instead of going forth to Sunday school and to meeting, she was obliged to remain at home on the sofa. The Captain, who is of a very punctilious piety, went off alone. When I came into the parlor, as the church-hells were ringing, Miss Blunt asked me if I never went to meeting.

"Never when there is anything better to do at home," said I.

"What is better than going to church?" she asked, with charming simplicity.

She was reclining on the sofa, with her foot on a pillow, and her Bible in her lap. She looked by no means afflicted at having to be absent from divine service; and, instead of answering her question, I took the liberty of telling her so.

"I am sorry to be absent," said she. "You know it's my only festival in the week."

"So you look upon it as a festival," said I.

"Isn't it a pleasure to meet one's acquaintance? I confess I am never deeply interested in the sermon, and I very much dislike teaching the children; but I like wearing my best bonnet, and singing in the choir, and walking part of the way home with—"

"With whom?"

"With any one who offers to walk with me."

"With Mr. Johnson, for instance," said I.

Mr. Johnson is a young lawyer in the village, who calls here once a week, and whose attentions to Miss Blunt have been remarked.

"Yes," she answered, "Mr. Johnson will do as an instance."

"How he will miss you!"

"I suppose he will. We sing off the same book. What are you laughing at? He kindly permits me to hold the book, while he stands with his hands in his pockets. Last Sunday I quite lost patience. Mr. Johnson, said I, do hold the book! Where are your manners? He burst out laughing in the midst of the reading. He will certainly have to hold the book to-day."

"What a masterful soul he is! I suppose he will call after meeting."

"Perhaps he will. I hope so."

"I hope he won't," said I, roundly. I am going to sit down here and talk to you, and I wish our tete-a-tete not to be interrupted."

"Have you anything particular to say?"

"Nothing so particular as Mr. Johnson, perhaps."

Miss Blunt has a very pretty affectation of being more matter-of-fact than she really is.

"His rights, then," said she, "are paramount to yours."

"Ah, you admit that he has rights?"

"Not at all. I simply assert that you have none."

"I beg your pardon. I have claims which I mean to enforce. I have a claim upon your undivided attention, when I pay you a morning call."

"Your claim is certainly answered. Have I been uncivil, pray?"

"Not uncivil, perhaps, but inconsiderate. You have been sighing for the company of a third person, which you can't expect me to relish."

"Why not, pray? If I, a lady, can put up with Mr. Johnson's society, why shouldn't you, one of his own sex?"

"Because he is so outrageously conceited. You, as a lady, or at any rate as a woman, like conceited men."

"Ah, yes; I have no doubt that I, as a woman, have all kinds of improper tastes. That's an old story."

"Admit, at any rate, that our friend is conceited."

"Admit it? Why, I have said so a hundred times. I have told him so."

"Indeed! It has come to that, then?"

"To what, pray?"

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"To that critical point in the friendship of a lady and gentleman, when they bring against each other all kinds of delightful charges of moral obliquity. Take care, Miss Blunt! A couple of intelligent New-Englanders, of opposite sex, young, unmarried, are pretty far gone, when they begin morally to reprobate each other. So you told Mr. Johnson that he is conceited? And I suppose you added, that he was also dreadfully satirical and skeptical? What was his rejoinder? Let me see. Did he ever tell you that you were a little bit affected?"

"No: he left that for you to say, in this very ingenious manner. Thank you, Sir."

"He left it for me to deny, which is a great deal prettier. Do you think the manner ingenious?"

"I think the matter, considering the day and hour, very profane, Mr. Locksley. Suppose you go away and let me read my Bible."

"Meanwhile," I asked, "what shall I do?"

"Go and read yours, if you have one."

"I haven't."

I was nevertheless compelled to retire, with the promise of a second audience in half an hour. Poor Miss Blunt owes it to her conscience to read a certain number of chapters. What a pure and upright soul she is! And what an edifying spectacle is much of our feminine piety! Women find a place for everything in their commodious little minds, just as they do in their wonderfully subdivided trunks, when they go on a journey. I have no doubt that this young lady stows away her religion in a corner, just as she does her Sunday bonnet,—and, when the proper moment comes, draws it forth, and reflects while she assumes it before the glass, and blows away the strictly imaginary dust: for what worldly impurity can penetrate through half a dozen layers of cambric and tissue-paper? Dear me, what a comfort it is to have a nice, fresh, holiday faith! When I returned to the parlor, Miss Blunt was still sitting with her Bible in her lap. Somehow or other, I no longer felt in the mood for jesting. So I asked her soberly what she had been reading. Soberly she answered me. She inquired how I had spent my half-hour.

"In thinking good Sabbath thoughts," I said. "I have been walking in the garden." And then I spoke my mind. "I have been thanking Heaven that it has led me, a poor, friendless wanderer, into so peaceful an anchorage."

"Are you, then, so poor and friendless?" asked Miss Blunt, quite abruptly.

"Did you ever hear of an art-student under thirty who wasn't poor?" I answered. "Upon my word, I have yet to sell my first picture. Then, as for being friendless, there are not five people in the world who really care for me."

"Really care? I am afraid you look too close. And then I think five good friends is a very large number. I think myself very well off with a couple. But if you are friendless, it's probably your own fault."

"Perhaps it is," said I, sitting down in the rocking-chair; "and yet, perhaps, it isn't. Have you found me so very repulsive? Haven't you, on the contrary, found me rather sociable?"

She folded her arms, and quietly looked at me for a moment, before answering. I shouldn't wonder if I blushed a little.

"You want a compliment, Mr. Locksley; that's the long and short of it. I have not paid you a compliment since you have been here. How you must have suffered! But it's a pity you couldn't have waited awhile longer, instead of beginning to angle with that very clumsy bait. For an artist, you are very inartistic. Men never know how to wait. 'Have I found you repulsive? haven't I found you sociable?' Perhaps, after all, considering what I have in my mind, it is as well that you asked for your compliment. I have found you charming. I say it freely; and yet I say, with equal sincerity, that I fancy very few others would find you so. I can say decidedly that you are not sociable. You are entirely too particular. You are considerate of me, because you know that I know that you are so. There's the rub, you see: I know that you know that I know it. Don't interrupt me; I am going to be eloquent. I want you to understand why I don't consider you sociable. You call Mr. Johnson conceited; but, really, I don't believe he's nearly as conceited as yourself. You are too conceited to be sociable; he is not. I am an obscure, weak-minded woman,—weak-minded, you know, compared with men. I can be patronized, yes, that's the word. Would you be equally amiable with a person as strong, as clear-sighted as yourself, with a person equally averse with yourself to being under an obligation? I think not. Of course it's delightful to charm people. Who wouldn't? There is no harm in it, as long as the charmer does not sit up for a public benefactor. If I were a man, a clever man like yourself, who had seen the world, who was not to be charmed and encouraged, but to be convinced and refuted, would you be equally amiable? It will perhaps seem absurd to you, and it will certainly seem egotistical, but I consider myself sociable, for all that I have only a couple of friends, — my father and the principal of the school. That is, I mingle with women without any second thought. Not that I wish you to do so: on the contrary, if the

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contrary is natural to you. But I don't believe you mingle in the same way with men. You may ask me what I know about it. Of course I know nothing: I simply guess. When I have done, indeed, I mean to beg your pardon for all I have said; but until then, give me a chance. You are incapable of listening deferentially to stupid, bigoted persons. I am not. I do it every day. Ah, you have no idea of what nice manners I have in the exercise of my profession! Every day I have occasion to pocket my pride and to stifle my precious sense of the ridiculous, of which, of course, you think I haven't a bit. It is, for instance, a constant vexation to me to be poor. It makes me frequently hate rich women; it makes me despise poor ones. I don't know whether you suffer acutely from the narrowness of your own means; but if you do, I dare say you shun rich men. I don't. I like to go into rich people's houses, and to be very polite to the ladies of the house, especially if they are very well-dressed and ignorant and vulgar. All women are like me in this respect; and all men more or less like you. That is, after all, the text of my sermon. Compared with us, it has always seemed to me that you are arrant cowards,—that we alone are brave. To be sociable, you must have a great deal of pluck. You are too fine a gentleman. Go and teach school, or open a corner grocery, or sit in a law-office all day, waiting for clients: then you will be sociable. As yet, you are only agreeable. It is your own fault, if people don't care for you. You don't care for them. That you should be indifferent to their applause is all very well; but you don't care for their indifference. You are amiable, you are very kind, and you are also very lazy. You consider that you are working now, don't you? Many persons would not call it work."

It was now certainly my turn to fold my arms.

"And now," added my companion, as I did so, "I beg your pardon."

"This was certainly worth waiting for," said I. "I don't know what answer to make. My head swims. I don't know whether you have been attacking me or praising me. So you advise me to open a corner grocery, do you?"

"I advise you to do something that will make you a little less satirical. You had better marry, for instance."

"Je ne demande pas mieux. Will you have me? I can't afford it."

"Marry a rich woman."

I shook my head.

"Why not?" asked Miss Blunt. "Because people would accuse you of being mercenary? What of that? I mean to marry the first rich man who offers. Do you know that I am tired of living alone in this weary old way, teaching little girls their gamut, and turning and patching my dresses? I mean to marry the first man who offers."

"Even if he is poor?"

"Even if he is poor, ugly, and stupid."

"I am your man, then. Would you take me, if I were to offer?"

"Try and see."

"Must I get upon my knees?"

"No, you need not even do that. Am I not on mine? It would be too fine an irony. Remain as you are, lounging back in your chair, with your thumbs in your waistcoat."

If I were writing a romance now, instead of transcribing facts, I would say that I knew not what might have happened at this juncture, had not the door opened and admitted the Captain and Mr. Johnson. The latter was in the highest spirits.

"How are you, Miss Esther? So you have been breaking your leg, eh? How are you, Mr. Locksley? I wish I were a doctor now. Which is it, right or left?"

In this simple fashion he made himself agreeable to Miss Blunt. He stopped to dinner and talked without ceasing. Whether our hostess had talked herself out in her very animated address to myself an hour before, or whether she preferred to oppose no obstacle to Mr. Johnson's fluency, or whether she was indifferent to him, I know not; but she held her tongue with that easy grace, that charming tacit intimation of "We could, and we would," of which she is so perfect a mistress. This very interesting woman has a number of pretty traits in common with her town-bred sisters; only, whereas in these they are laboriously acquired, in her they are severely natural. I am sure, that, if I were to plant her in Madison Square to-morrow, she would, after one quick, all-compassing glance, assume the *nil admirari* in a manner to drive the greatest lady of them all to despair. Johnson is a man of excellent intentions, but no taste. Two or three times I looked at Miss Blunt to see what impression his sallies were making upon her. They seemed to produce none whatever. But I know better, *moi*. Not one of them escaped her. But I suppose she said to herself that her impressions on this point were no business of

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mine. Perhaps she was right. It is a disagreeable word to use of a woman you admire; but I can't help fancying that she has been a little soured. By what? Who shall say? By some old love affair, perhaps.

July 24th. This evening the Captain and I took a half-hour's turn about the harbor. I asked him frankly, as a friend, whether Johnson wants to marry his daughter.

"I guess he does," said the old man; "and yet I hope he don't. You know what he is: he's smart, promising, and already sufficiently well off. But somehow he isn't for a man what my Esther is for a woman."

"That he isn't!" said I; "and honestly, Captain Blunt, I don't know who is" –

"Unless it's yourself," said the Captain.

"Thank you. I know a great many ways in which Mr. Johnson is more worthy of her than I."

"And I know one in which you are more worthy of her than he,—that is, in being what we used to call a gentleman."

"Miss Esther made him sufficiently welcome in her quiet way, on Sunday," I rejoined.

"Oh, she respects him," said Blunt. "As she's situated, she might marry him on that. You see, she's weary of hearing little girls drum on the piano. With her ear for music," added the Captain, "I wonder she has borne it so long."

She is certainly meant for better things," said I.

Well," answered the Captain, who has an honest habit of deprecating your agreement, when it occurs to him that he has obtained it for sentiments which fall somewhat short of the stoical,—"well," said he, with a very dry expression of mouth, "she's born to do her duty. We are all of us born for that."

"Sometimes our duty is rather dreary," said I.

"So it be; but what's the help for it? I don't want to die without seeing my daughter provided for. What she makes by teaching is a pretty slim subsistence. There was a time when I thought she was going to be fixed for life, but it all blew over. There was a young fellow here from down Boston way, who came about as near to it as you can come, when you actually don't. He and Esther were excellent friends. One day Esther came up to me, and looked me in the face, and told me she was engaged.

"Who to?" says I, though of course I knew, and Esther told me as much. 'When do you expect to marry?' I asked.

"When John grows rich enough," says she.

"When will that be?"

"It may not be for years," said poor Esther.

"A whole year passed, and, as far as I could see, the young man came no nearer to his fortune. He was forever running to and fro between this place and Boston. I asked no questions, because I knew that my poor girl wished it so. But at last, one day, I began to think it was time to take an observation, and see whereabouts we stood.

"Has John made his fortune yet?" I asked.

"I don't know, father," said Esther.

"When are you to be married?"

"Never!" said my poor little girl, and burst into tears. 'Please ask me no questions,' said she. 'Our engagement is over. Ask me no questions.'"

"Tell me one thing," said I: 'where is that damned scoundrel who has broken my daughter's heart?'"

"You should have seen the look she gave me."

"Broken my heart, Sir? You are very much mistaken. I don't know who you mean."

"I mean John Banister," said I. That was his name."

"I believe Mr. Banister is in China," says Esther, as grand as the Queen of Sheba. And there was an end of it. I never learnt the ins and outs of it. I have been told that Banister is accumulating money very fast in the China trade."

August 7th. I have made no entry for more than a fortnight. They tell me I have been very ill; and I find no difficulty in believing them. I suppose I took cold, sitting out so late, sketching. At all events, I have had a mild intermittent fever. I have slept so much, however, that the time has seemed rather short. I have been tenderly nursed by this kind old gentleman, his daughter, and his maid-servant. God bless them, one and all! I say his daughter, because old Dorothy informs me that for half an hour one morning, at dawn, after a night during which I had been very feeble, Miss Blunt relieved guard at my bedside, while I lay wrapt in brutal slumber. It is very jolly

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to see sky and ocean once again. I have got myself into my easy-chair by the open window, with my shutters closed and the lattice open; and here I sit with my book on my knee, scratching away feebly enough. Now and then I peep from my cool, dark sick-chamber out into the world of light. High noon at midsummer! What a spectacle! There are no clouds in the sky, no waves on the ocean. The sun has it all to himself. To look long at the garden makes the eyes water. And we—"Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes, and Nokes"—propose to paint that kingdom of light. Allons donc!

The loveliest of women has just tapped, and come in with a plate of early peaches. The peaches are of a gorgeous color and plumpness; but Miss Blunt looks pale and thin. The hot weather doesn't agree with her. She is overworked. Confound it! Of course I thanked her warmly for her attentions during my illness. She disclaims all gratitude, and refers me to her father and Mrs. Dorothy.

"I allude more especially," said I, "to that little hour at the end of a weary night, when you stole in like a kind of moral Aurora, and drove away the shadows from my brain. That morning, you know, I began to get better."

"It was indeed a very little hour," said Miss Blunt. "It was about ten minutes." And then she began to scold me for presuming to touch a pen during my convalescence. She laughs at me, indeed, for keeping a diary at all. "Of all things," cried she, "a sentimental man is the most despicable."

I confess I was somewhat nettled. The thrust seemed gratuitous.

"Of all things," I answered, "a woman without sentiment is the most unlovely."

"Sentiment and loveliness are all very well, when you have time for them," said Miss Blunt. "I haven't. I'm not rich enough. Good morning." Speaking of another woman, I would say that she flounced out of the room. But such was the gait of Juno, when she moved stiffly over the grass from where Paris stood with Venus holding the apple, gathering up her divine vestment, and leaving the others to guess at her face –

Juno has just come back to say that she forgot what she came for half an hour ago. What will I be pleased to like for dinner?

"I have just been writing in my diary that you flounced out of the room," said I.

"Have you, indeed? Now you can write that I have bounced in. There's a nice cold chicken down-stairs," etc., etc.

August 14th. This afternoon I sent for a light wagon, and treated Miss Blunt to a drive. We went successively over the three beaches. What a time we had, coming home! I shall never forget that hard trot over Weston's Beach. The tide was very low; and we had the whole glittering, weltering strand to ourselves. There was a heavy blow yesterday, which had not yet subsided; and the waves had been lashed into a magnificent fury. Trot, trot, trot, trot, we trundled over the hard sand. The sound of the horse's hoofs rang out sharp against the monotone of the thunderous surf, as we drew nearer and nearer to the long line of the cliffs. At our left, almost from the lofty zenith of the pale evening sky to the high western horizon of the tumultuous dark-green sea, was suspended, so to speak, one of those gorgeous vertical sunsets that Turner loved so well. It was a splendid confusion of purple and green and gold, the clouds flying and flowing in the wind like the folds of a mighty banner borne by some triumphal fleet whose prows were not visible above the long chain of mountainous waves. As we reached the point where the cliffs plunge down upon the beach, I pulled up, and we remained for some moments looking out along the low, brown, obstinate barrier at whose feet the impetuous waters were rolling themselves into powder.

August 17th. This evening, as I lighted my bedroom candle, I saw that the Captain had something to say to me. So I waited below until the old man and his daughter had performed their usual picturesque embrace, and the latter had given me that hand-shake and that smile which I never, failed to exact.

"Johnson has got his discharge," said the old man, when he had heard his daughter's door close up-stairs.

"What do you mean?"

He pointed with his thumb to the room above, where we heard, through the thin partition, the movement of Miss Blunt's light step.

"You mean that he has proposed to Miss Esther?"

The Captain nodded.

"And has been refused?"

"Flat."

"Poor fellow!" said I, very honestly. "Did he tell you himself?"

"Yes, with tears in his eyes. He wanted me to speak for him. I told him it was no use. Then he began to say

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hard things of my poor girl."

"What kind of things?"

"A pack of falsehoods. He says she has no heart. She has promised always to regard him as a friend: it's more than I will, hang him!"

"Poor fellow!" said I; and now, as I write, I can only repeat, considering what a hope was here broken, Poor fellow!

August 23d. I have been lounging about all day, thinking of it, dreaming of it, spooning over it, as they say. This is a decided waste of time. I think, accordingly, the best thing for me to do is, to sit down and lay the ghost by writing out my story.

On Thursday evening Miss Blunt happened to intimate that she had a holiday on the morrow, it being the birthday of the lady in whose establishment she teaches.

"There is to be a tea-party at four o'clock in the afternoon for the resident pupils and teachers," said Miss Esther. "Tea at four! what do you think of that? And then there is to be a speech-making by the smartest young lady. As my services are not required, I propose to be absent. Suppose, father, you take us out in your boat. Will you come, Mr. Locksley? We shall have a nice little picnic. Let us go over to old Fort Pudding, across the bay. We will take our dinner with us, and send Dorothy to spend the day with her sister, and put the house-key in our pocket, and not come home till we please."

I warmly espoused the project, and it was accordingly carried into execution the next morning, when, at about ten o'clock, we pushed off from our little wharf at the garden-foot. It was a perfect summer's day: I can say no more for it. We made a quiet run over to the point of our destination. I shall never forget the wondrous stillness which brooded over earth and water, as we weighed anchor in the lee of my old friend,—or old enemy,—the ruined fort. The deep, translucent water reposed at the base of the warm sunlit cliff like a great basin of glass, which I half expected to hear shiver and crack as our keel ploughed through it. And how color and sound stood out in the transparent air! How audibly the little ripples on the beach whispered to the open sky! How our irreverent voices seemed to jar upon the privacy of the little cove! The mossy rocks doubled themselves without a flaw in the clear, dark water. The gleaming white beach lay fringed with its deep deposits of odorous sea-weed, gleaming black. The steep, straggling sides of the cliffs raised aloft their rugged angles against the burning blue of the sky. I remember, when Miss Blunt stepped ashore and stood upon the beach, relieved against the heavy shadow of a recess in the cliff, while her father and I busied ourselves with gathering up our baskets and fastening the anchor—I remember, I say, what a figure she made. There is a certain purity in this Cragthorpe air which I have never seen approached,—a lightness, a brilliancy, a crudity, which allows perfect liberty of self-assertion to each individual object in the landscape. The prospect is ever more or less like a picture which lacks its final process, its reduction to unity. Miss Blunt's figure, as she stood there on the beach, was almost criarde; but how lovely it was! Her light muslin dress, gathered up over her short white skirt, her little black mantilla, the blue veil which she had knotted about her neck, the crimson shawl which she had thrown over her arm, the little silken dome which she poised over her head in one gloved hand, while the other retained her crisp draperies, and which cast down upon her face a sharp circle of shade, out of which her cheerful eyes shone darkly and her happy mouth smiled whitely,—these are some of the hastily noted points of the picture.

"Young woman," I cried out, over the water, "I do wish you might know how pretty you look!"

"How do you know I don't?" she answered. "I should think I might. You don't look so badly, yourself. But it's not I; it's the accessories."

"Hang it! I am going to become profane," I called out again.

"Swear ahead," said the Captain.

"I am going to say you are devilish pretty."

"Dear me! is that all?" cried Miss Blunt, with a little light laugh, which must have made the tutelar sirens of the cove ready to die with jealousy down in their submarine bowers.

By the time the Captain and I had landed our effects, our companion had tripped lightly up the forehead of the cliff—in one place it is very retreating—and disappeared over its crown. She soon reappeared with an intensely white handkerchief added to her other provocations, which she waved to us, as we trudged upward, carrying our baskets. When we stopped to take breath on the summit, and wipe our foreheads, we of course rebuked her who was roaming about idly with her parasol and gloves.

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"Do you think I am going to take any trouble or do any work?" cried Miss Esther, in the greatest good-humor. "Is not this my holiday? I am not going to raise a finger, nor soil these beautiful gloves, for which I paid a dollar at Mr. Dawson's in Cragthorpe. After you have found a shady place for your provisions, I would like you to look for a spring. I am very thirsty."

"Find the spring yourself, Miss," said her father. "Mr. Locksley and I have a spring in this basket. Take a pull, Sir."

And the Captain drew forth a stout black bottle.

"Give me a cup, and I will look for some water," said Miss Blunt. "Only I'm so afraid of the snakes! If you hear a scream, you may know it's a snake."

"Screaming snakes!" said I; "that a new species."

What nonsense it all sounds like now! As we looked about us, shade seemed scarce, as it generally is, in this region. But Miss Blunt, like the very adroit and practical young person she is, for all that she would have me believe the contrary, soon discovered a capital cool spring in the shelter of a pleasant little dell, beneath a clump of firs. Hither, as one of the young gentlemen who imitate Tennyson would say, we brought our basket, Blunt and I; while Esther dipped the cup, and held it dripping to our thirsty lips, and laid the cloth, and on the grass disposed the platters round. I should have to be a poet, indeed, to describe half the happiness and the silly poetry and purity and beauty of this bright long summer's day. We ate, drank, and talked; we ate occasionally with our fingers, we drank out of the necks of our bottles, and we talked with our mouths full, as befits (and excuses) those who talk wild nonsense. We told stories without the least point. Blunt and I made atrocious puns. I believe, indeed, that Miss Blunt herself made one little punkin, as I called it. If there had been any superfluous representative of humanity present, to register the fact, I should say that we made fools of ourselves. But as there was no fool on hand, I need say nothing about it. I am conscious myself of having said several witty things, which Miss Blunt understood: in vino veritas. The dear old Captain twanged the long bow indefatigably. The bright high sun lingered above us the livelong day, and drowned the prospect with light and warmth. One of these days I mean to paint a picture which in future ages, when my dear native land shall boast a national school of art, will hang in the Salon Carre of the great central museum, (located, let us say, in Chicago,) and remind folks—or rather make them forget—Giorgione, Bordone, and Veronese: A Rural Festival; three persons feasting under some trees; scene, nowhere in particular; time and hour, problematical. Female figure, a big brune; young man reclining on his elbow; old man drinking. An empty sky, with no end of expression. The whole stupendous in color, drawing, feeling. Artist uncertain; supposed to be Robinson, 1900. That's about the programme.

After dinner the Captain began to look out across the bay, and, noticing the uprising of a little breeze, expressed a wish to cruise about for an hour or two. He proposed to us to walk along the shore to a point a couple of miles northward, and there meet the boat. His daughter having agreed to this proposition, he set off with the lightened pannier, and in less than half an hour we saw him standing out from shore. Miss Blunt and I did not begin our walk for a long, long time. We sat and talked beneath the trees. At our feet, a wide cleft in the hills—almost a glen—stretched down to the silent beach. Beyond lay the familiar ocean-line. But, as many philosophers have observed, there is an end to all things. At last we got up. Miss Blunt said, that, as the air was freshening, she believed she would put on her shawl. I helped her to fold it into the proper shape, and then I placed it on her shoulders, her crimson shawl over her black silk sack. And then she tied her veil once more about her neck, and gave me her hat to hold, while she effected a partial redistribution of her hair-pins. By way of being humorous, I placed her hat on my own head; at which she was kind enough to smile, as with downcast face and uplifted elbows she fumbled among her braids. And then she shook out the creases of her dress, and drew on her gloves; and finally she said, "Well!"—that inevitable tribute to time and morality which follows upon even the mildest forms of dissipation. Very slowly it was that we wandered down the little glen. Slowly, too, we followed the course of the narrow and sinuous beach, as it keeps to the foot of the low cliffs. We encountered no sign of human life. Our conversation I need hardly repeat. I think I may trust it to the keeping of my memory: I think I shall be likely to remember it. It was all very sober and sensible,—such talk as it is both easy and pleasant to remember; it was even prosaic,—or, at least, if there was a vein of poetry in it, I should have defied a listener to put his finger on it. There was no exaltation of feeling or utterance on either side; on one side, indeed, there was very little utterance. Am I wrong in conjecturing, however, that there was considerable feeling of a certain quiet kind? Miss Blunt maintained a rich, golden silence. I, on the other hand, was very voluble. What a sweet,

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womanly listener she is!

September 1st. I have been working steadily for a week. This is the first day of autumn. Read aloud to Miss Blunt a little Wordsworth.

September 10th. Midnight.—Worked without interruption,—until yesterday, inclusive, that is. But with the day now closing—or opening—begins a new era. My poor vapid old diary, at last you shall hold a fact.

For three days past we have been having damp, chilly weather. Dusk has fallen early. This evening, after tea, the Captain went into town, — on business, as he said: I believe, to attend some Poorhouse or Hospital Board. Esther and I went into the parlor. The room seemed cold. She brought in the lamp from the dining-room, and proposed we should have a little fire. I went into the kitchen, procured an armful of wood, and while she drew the curtains and wheeled up the table, I kindled a lively, crackling blaze. A fortnight ago she would not have allowed me to do this without a protest. She would not have offered to do it herself,—not she!—but she would have said that I was not here to serve, but to be served, and would have pretended to call Dorothy. Of course I should have had my own way. But we have changed all that. Esther went to her piano, and I sat down to a book. I read not a word. I sat looking at my mistress, and thinking with a very uneasy heart. For the first time in our friendship, she had put on a dark, warm dress: I think it was of the material called alpaca. The first time I saw her she wore a white dress with a purple neck-ribbon ; now she wore a black dress with the same ribbon. That is, I remember wondering, as I sat there eying her, whether it was the same ribbon, or merely another like it. My heart was in my throat; and yet I thought of a number of trivialities of the same kind. At last I spoke.

"Miss Blunt," I said, "do you remember the first evening I passed beneath your roof, last June?"

"Perfectly," she replied, without stopping.

"You played this same piece."

"Yes; I played it very badly, too. I only half knew it. But it is a showy piece; and I wished to produce an effect. I didn't know then how indifferent you are to music."

"I paid no particular attention to the piece. I was intent upon the performer."

"So the performer supposed."

"What reason had you to suppose so?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Did you ever know a woman to be able to give a reason, when she has guessed aright?"

"I think they generally contrive to make up a reason, afterwards. Come, what was yours?"

"Well, you stared so hard."

"Fie! I don't believe it. That's unkind."

"You said you wished me to invent a reason. If I really had one, I don't remember it."

"You told me you remembered the occasion in question perfectly."

"I meant the circumstances. I remember what we had for tea; I remember what dress I wore. But I don't remember my feelings. They were naturally not very memorable."

"What did you say, when your father proposed my coming?"

"I asked how much you would be willing to pay?"

"And then?"

"And then, if you looked respectable."

"And then?"

"That was all. I told father to do as he pleased."

She continued to play. Leaning back in my chair, I continued to look at her. There was a considerable pause.

"Miss Esther," said I, at last.

"Yes."

"Excuse me for interrupting you so often. But,"—and I got up and went to the piano,— "but I thank Heaven that it has brought you and me together."

She looked up at me and bowed her head with a little smile, as her hands still wandered over the keys.

"Heaven has certainly been very good to us," said she.

"How much longer are you going to play?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't know. As long as you like."

"If you want to do as I like, you will stop immediately."

She let her hands rest on the keys a moment, and gave me a rapid, questioning look. Whether she found a

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sufficient answer in my face I know not; but she slowly rose, and, with a very pretty affectation of obedience, began to close the instrument. I helped her to do so.

"Perhaps you would like to be quite alone," she said. "I suppose your own room is too cold."

"Yes," I answered, "you've hit it exactly. I wish to be alone. I wish to monopolize this cheerful blaze. Hadn't you better go into the kitchen and sit with the cook? It takes you women to make such cruel speeches."

"When we women are cruel, Mr. Locksley, it is without knowing it. We are not wilfully so. When we learn that we have been unkind, we very humbly ask pardon, without even knowing what our crime has been." And she made me a very low curtsy.

"A long story? Then let me get my work."

"Confound your work! Excuse me, but I mean it. I want you to listen to me. Believe me, you will need all your thoughts."

She looked at me steadily a moment, and I returned her glance. During that moment I was reflecting whether I might silently emphasize my request by laying a lover's hand upon her shoulder. I decided that I might not. She walked over and quietly seated herself in a low chair by the fire. Here she patiently folded her arms. I sat down before her.

"With you, Miss Blunt," said I, "one must be very explicit. You are not in the habit of taking things for granted. You have a great deal of imagination, but you rarely exercise it on the behalf of other people." I stopped a moment.

"It's not so much a crime as a vice," said I; "and perhaps not so much a vice as a virtue. Your crime is, that you are so stone-cold to a poor devil who loves you."

She burst into a rather shrill laugh. I wonder whether she thought I meant Johnson.

"Who are you speaking for, Mr. Locksley?" she asked.

"Are there so many? For myself."

"Honestly?"

"Honestly doesn't begin to express it."

"What is that French phrase that you are forever using? I think I may say, 'Allons, donc!'"

"Let us speak plain English, Miss Blunt."

"Stone-cold is certainly very plain English. I don't see the relative importance of the two branches of your proposition. Which is the principal, and which the subordinate clause,—that I am stone-cold, as you call it, or that you love me, as you call it?"

"As I call it? What would you have me call it? For God's sake, Miss Blunt, be serious, or I shall call it something else. Yes, I love you. Don't you believe it?"

"I am open to conviction."

"Thank God!" said I.

And I attempted to take her hand.

"No, no, Mr. Locksley," said she,— "not just yet, if you please."

"Action speaks louder than words," said I.

"There is no need of speaking loud. I hear you perfectly."

"I certainly shan't whisper," said I "although it is the custom, I believe, for lovers to do so. Will you be my wife?"

"I shan't whisper, either, Mr. Locksley. Yes, I will."

And now she put out her hand.—That's my fact.

September 12th. We are to be married within three weeks.

September 19th. I have been in New York a week, transacting business. I got back yesterday. I find every one here talking about our engagement. Esther tells me that it was talked about a month ago, and that there is a very general feeling of disappointment that I am not rich.

"Really, if you don't mind it," said I, "I don't see why others should."

"I don't know whether you are rich or not," says Esther; "but I know that I am."

"Indeed! I was not aware that you had a private fortune," etc., etc.

This little farce is repeated in some shape every day. I am very idle. I smoke a great deal, and lounge about all day, with my hands in my pockets. I am free from that ineffable weariness of ceaseless giving which I

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experienced six months ago. I was shorn of my hereditary trinkets at that period; and I have resolved that this engagement, at all events, shall have no connection with the shops. I was balked of my poetry once; I shan't be a second time. I don't think there is much danger of this. Esther deals it out with full hands. She takes a very pretty interest in her simple outfit, showing me triumphantly certain of her purchases, and making a great mystery about others, which she is pleased to denominate tablecloths and napkins. Last evening I found her sewing buttons on a tablecloth. I had heard a great deal of a certain gray silk dress; and this morning, accordingly, she marched up to me, arrayed in this garment. It is trimmed with velvet, and hath flounces, a train, and all the modern improvements generally.

"There is only one objection to it," said Esther, parading before the glass in my painting-room: "I am afraid it is above our station."

"By Jove! Ill paint your portrait in it," said I, "and make our fortune. All the other men who have handsome wives will bring them to be painted."

"You mean all the women who have handsome dresses," said Esther, with great humility.

Our wedding is fixed for next Thursday. I tell Esther that it will be as little of a wedding, and as much of a marriage, as possible. Her father and her good friend the schoolmistress alone are to be present. My secret oppresses me considerably; but I have resolved to keep it for the honeymoon, when it may take care of itself. I am harassed with a dismal apprehension, that, if Esther were to discover it now, the whole thing would be a *refaire*. I have taken rooms at a romantic little watering-place called Clifton, ten miles off. The hotel is already quite free of city-people, and we shall be almost alone.

September 28th. We have been here two days. The little transaction in the church went off smoothly. I am truly sorry for the Captain. We drove directly over here, and reached the place at dusk. It was a raw, black day. We have a couple of good rooms, close to the savage sea. I am nevertheless afraid I have made a mistake. It would perhaps have been wiser to go inland. These things are not immaterial: we make our own heaven, but we scarcely make our own earth. I am writing at a little table by the window, looking out on the rocks, the gathering dusk, and the rising fog. My wife has wandered down to the rocky platform in front of the house. I can see her from here, bareheaded, in that old crimson shawl, talking to one of the landlord's little boys. She has just given the little fellow a kiss, bless her heart! I remember her telling me once that she was very fond of little boys; and, indeed, I have noticed that they are seldom too dirty for her to take on her knee. I have been reading over these pages for the first time in—I don't know when. They are filled with her, even more in thought than in word. I believe I will show them to her, when she comes in. I will give her the book to read, and sit by her, watching her face, watching the great secret dawn upon her.

Later. Somehow or other, I can write this quietly enough; but I hardly think I shall ever write any more. When Esther came in, I handed her this book.

"I want you to read it," said I.

She turned very pale, and laid it on the table, shaking her head.

"I know it," she said.

"What do you know?"

"That you have a hundred thousand a year. But believe me, Mr. Locksley, I am none the worse for the knowledge. You intimated in one place in your book that I am born for wealth and splendor. I believe I am. You pretend to hate your money; but you would not have had me without it. If you really love me, and I think you do, you will not let this make any difference. I am not such a fool as to attempt to talk here about my sensations. But I remember what I said."

"What do you expect me to do?" I asked. "Shall I call you some horrible name and cast you off?"

"I expect you to show the same courage that I am showing. I never said I loved you. I never deceived you in that. I said I would be your wife. So I will, faithfully. I haven't so much heart as you think; and yet, too, I have a great deal more. I am incapable of more than one deception. Mercy! didn't you see it? didn't you know it? see that I saw it? know that I knew it? It was diamond cut diamond. You deceived me; I deceived you. Now that your deception ceases, mine ceases. Now we are free, with our hundred thousand a year! Excuse me, but it sometimes comes across me! Now we can be good and honest and true. It was all a make-believe virtue before."

"So you read that thing?" I asked: actually—strange as it may seem—for something to say.

"Yes, while you were ill. It was lying with your pen in it, on the table. I read it because I suspected. Otherwise

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I shouldn't have done so."

"It was the act of a false woman," said I.

"A false woman? No,—simply of a woman. I am a woman, Sir." And she began to smile. "Come, you be a man!"