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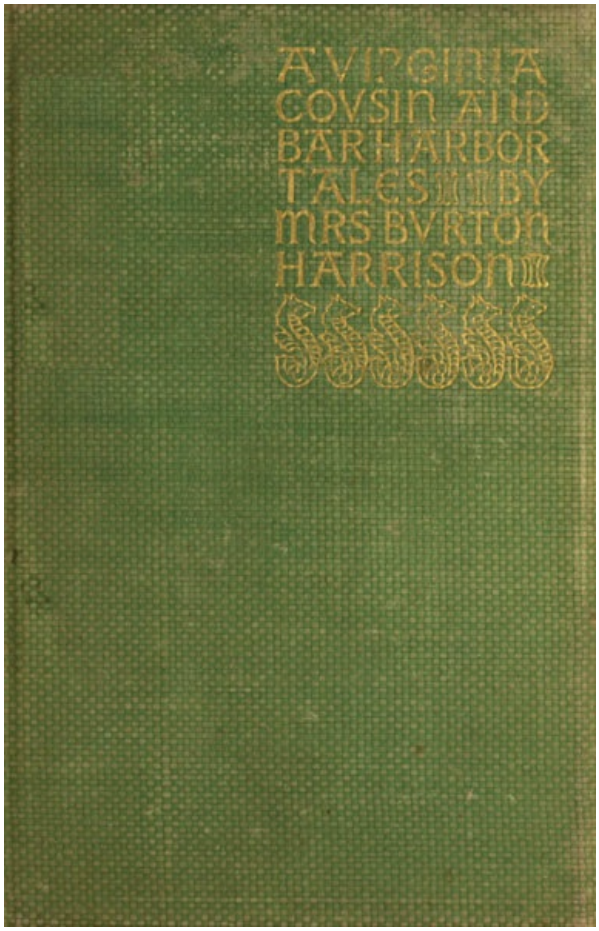
Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected. Inconsistent spelling and hyphenation in the original document have been preserved.

On page 16, "bran-new" may be a typo for "brand-new".



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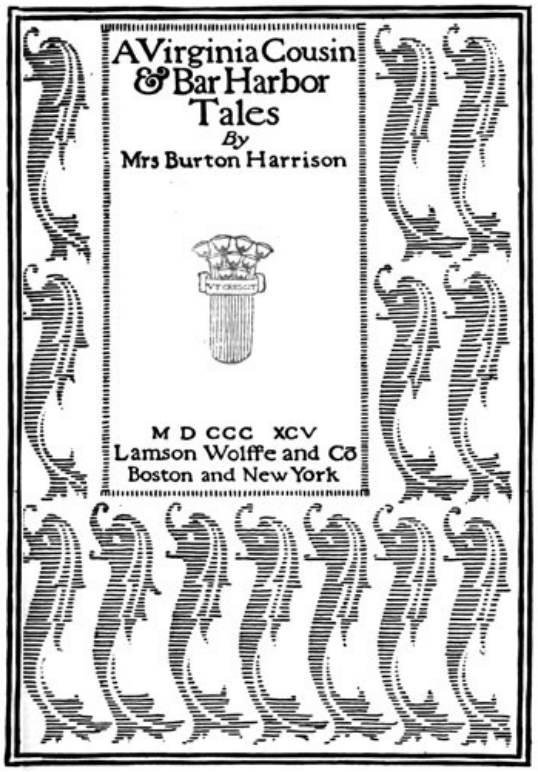

A Virginia Cousin & Bar Harbor Tales

By
Mrs Burton Harrison

M D CCC XCV
Lamson Wolffe and Cō
Boston and New York

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Note by the Author

The little story "A Virginia Cousin," here put into print for the first time, is in some sort a tribute offered by a long-exiled child of the South to her native soil. It is also a transcript of certain phases of that life in the metropolis which has been pooh-poohed by some critics as trivially undeserving of a chronicler, but fortunate hitherto in finding a few readers willing to concede as

much humanity to the "heroine in satin" as to the "confidante in linen."

Of the other contents of this volume, "Out of Season" made its first appearance some time ago in *Two Tales*, and "On Frenchman's Bay" was published in *The Cosmopolitan Magazine*.

C. C. H.

New York,
November, 1895

A Virginia Cousin

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Chapter I

Mr. Theodore Vance Townsend awoke to the light of a spring morning in New York, feeling at odds with the world. The cause for this state of variance with existing circumstances was not at sight apparent. He was young, good-looking, well-born, well-mannered, and, to support these claims to favorable consideration, had come into the fortunes of a father and two maiden aunts,—a piece of luck that had, however, not secured for him the unqualified approbation of his fellow-citizens.

Joined to the fact that, upon first leaving college, some years before, he had led a few *cotillons* at New York balls, his wealth and leisure had brought upon Townsend the reproach of the metropolitan press to the extent that nothing short of his committing suicide would have induced it to look upon anything he did as in earnest. 4

With an inherited love of letters, he had dabbled in literature so far as to write and publish a book of verse, of fair merit, which, however, had been received with tumultuous rhapsodies of satire by the professional critics. The style and title of "Laureate of the 400," applied in this connection, had indeed clung to him and made life hateful in his sight. To escape it and the other rubs of unoccupied solvency, he had made many journeys into foreign countries, had gone around the globe, and, in due course, had always come to the surface in New York again, with a sort of doglike attachment to the place of his birth that would not wear away.

Of the society he was familiar with, Vance was profoundly weary. Of domestic ties, he had only a sister, married to a rich banker, and in possession of a fine new house, whose tapestries and electric lighting occupied all her thoughts and conversation that could be spared for things indoors. Away from home, Mrs. Clifton was continually on the wing, attending to the demands of philanthropy or charity, and to cultivation of the brain in classes of women of incomes equal to her own. Whenever her brother dined with her, she entertained him with a voluble flow of conversation about these women and their affairs, never failing, however, to exhibit her true sisterly feeling by telling Vance that she could not see why in the world he did not marry Kitty Ainger and settle down. 5

By dint of much iteration, this suggestion of Kitty Ainger as a wife had come to take languid possession of the young man's brain. Besides, he liked Miss Ainger as well as admired her, and was perhaps more content in her company than in that of anybody else he knew.

On the spring morning in question, he had awaked in a flood of sunshine and fresh air that poured through the open windows of his room. His cold bath, his simple breakfast, his ride in the Park, brought his sensations of physical well-being to a point that almost excited his spirits to strike a balance of youthful cheerfulness. He forgot his oppressive belongings, the obloquy they had conferred upon him in the minds of men who make public opinion about others as citizens, his unreasonable stagnation of ambition. 6

As he cantered along the equestrian byways of the Park, and felt, without noting, the stir of new life in nature, he grew light of heart and buoyant. And as this condition increased, his thoughts crystallized around the image of Katherine Ainger. She, too, loved her morning ride; no doubt he should meet her presently. He had not seen her since Thursday of last week, when he had taken her in to dinner at Mrs. Cartwright's; and he had a vague idea she had resented him a little on that occasion. Her talk had been a trifle baffling, her eyes evasive. But she had worn a stunning gown, and was by all odds the best-looking woman of the lot. How well she sat at table, by the way! What an admirable figure for a man who would be forced to entertain, to place at the head of his board in perpetuity!

Their families, too, had always known each other. And she was so uncommonly level-headed and sensible! Agreeable, too; no whims, no fancies. He had never heard of her being ill for a day. As to temper and disposition, they matched all the rest. She had never flirted; and, marrying at twenty-six a husband of twenty-nine, she would give him no possible anxiety on that score. 7

Yes, his sister was right; everybody was right. Miss Ainger was the mate designed for him by heaven; and he had been a fool to dawdle so long in making up his mind to accept the fact.

As the sunshine warmed him, and his horse forged along with a beautiful even stride beneath him, Vance worked up to a degree of enthusiasm he had not felt since he played on a winning football eleven in a college game. That very day he would seek her and ask her to be his wife. They would be married as soon as she was willing, and would go away in the yacht somewhere and learn to love each other. He would have an aim, a home, a stake in the community. At thirty years of age, he should be found no longer in dalliance with time to make it pass away.

Vance, enamored of these visions, finished the circuit of the Park without seeing the central object of them, with whom he had resolved to make an appointment to receive him at home that afternoon. He rode back to the stable where he kept his horse, left it there, and, getting into an elevated car, went down-town to visit his lawyer, going with that gentleman afterwards into the stately halls of the Lawyers' Club for luncheon. 8

At a table near him, Vance saw, sitting alone, a man named Crawford, whom he had met casually and knew for a hardworking and ambitious junior member of the New York bar. They exchanged nods, and Vance fancied that Crawford looked at him with a scrutiny more close than the occasion warranted.

"You know Crawford, then?" said Mr. Gleason, an old friend of Vance's father. "He began work with our firm, but had an offer for a partnership in a year or two, and left us. He's a tremendous fellow to grind, but is beginning to reap the benefit of it in making a name for himself. If that fellow had a little capital, there is nothing he could not do, in this community. He has never been abroad, has had no pleasures of society, leads a scrupulously regular life, drinks no liquors or wines of any kind, and is in bed by twelve o'clock every night of his life. His only indulgence is to buy books, with which his lodgings overflow. We have always supposed him to be a woman-hater, until latterly, when straws seem to show that the wind blows for him from a point of sentiment. He was in the Adirondacks last summer, in camp with a friend, and I've an idea he met his fate then. After all, Vance, my dear boy, marriage is the goal man runs for, be he what he may. It will develop John Crawford, just as it would develop you, in the right direction; and I heartily wish you would tell me when you intend to succumb to the universal fate, and fall in love." 9

"I heartily wish I could," said Vance, with a tinge of the mockery he had that morning put aside.

At that moment, Crawford, who had finished his luncheon, passed their table, hat in hand, bowing and smiling as he did so. A waiter, jostling by, made him loosen his hold of the hat, a rather shabby light-brown Derby, that rolled under Vance Townsend's feet. It was lifted by Vance and restored to its owner before the waiter could reach the spot; and again Vance thought he detected a look of significance, incomprehensible to him, in the frank eyes Crawford turned upon him as he expressed his thanks. 10

"It would have been a benefit to Crawford's friends to have accidentally put your foot through that hat," said Mr. Gleason, laughing. "He is accused by them of having worn it ever since he was admitted to the bar. But then, who thinks of clothes, with a real man inside of them? And no doubt the girl they say he is going to marry will right these trifling matters in short order."

"I like Crawford; I must see more of him," replied Vance. "He strikes me as the fellow to pass a pleasant evening with. I wonder if he would come to dine with me."

"If you bait your invitation with an offer to show your first editions, no doubt of it," said Mr. Gleason. "But to go back to our conversation, Vance. When are we to—" 11

"I decline to answer," interrupted the young man, smiling, nevertheless, in such a way that Mr. Gleason built up a whole structure of probabilities upon that single smile.

Yes, Vance decided, everything conspired to urge him toward his intended venture that afternoon. When, about four o'clock, he turned his steps in the direction of Miss Ainger's home, he had reached a pitch of very respectably loverlike anxiety. He even fancied the day had been unusually long. He caught himself speculating as to where she would be sitting in the drawing-room, how she would look when he laid his future in her hands.

At that moment, he allowed himself to remember a series of occasions during the years of their friendship, upon any one of which he believed he might have spoken as he now meant to speak, and that she would have answered as he now expected her to answer. Ah! what had he not lost? In her gentle, equable companionship, he would have been a better, a higher, a less discontented fellow. All the virtues, charms, desirable qualities, of this fine and high-bred young woman, who had been more patient, more forgiving, than he deserved, were concentrated into one small space of thought, like the Lord's Prayer engraved upon a tiny coin. But even as his foot touched the lowest step of her father's portal, he experienced a shock of doubt of himself and of his own stability. He tarried; he turned away, and strolled, whither he knew not. 12

In the adjoining street lived Mrs. Myrtle, an aunt of his, to whom, it must be said, Vance rarely paid the deference considered by that excellent lady her just due. She inhabited the brown-stone dwelling in which, as a bride, she had gone to housekeeping when New York society was still within limits of visitors on foot. Not that that made any difference to Mrs. Myrtle, who had always kept her carriage, and had, about twenty years back, been cited as a leader of the metropolitan *beau monde*.

In those days, whether on wheels or a-foot, everybody went to Mrs. Myrtle's Thursdays. Her spacious drawing-rooms, papered in crimson flock paper, with their massive doors and mouldings and mirror-frames and curtain-tops of ebonized wood with gold scroll decorations, their furniture in the same wood, with red satin damask coverings, had, in their time, contained the elect of good society. The pictures upon Mrs. Myrtle's walls, and the statuary scattered on pedestals about the rooms, were then quoted by the newspapers, and by those so favored as to see them, as a rare display of the highest art, accumulated by an American householder. One of the earliest affronts of many unintentionally put upon his aunt by Vance had been his contemptuous shrug of the shoulders when called upon by her, shortly after his return from his first winter spent in Italy, to view her "statuary." 13

Since then, Mrs. Myrtle had, little by little, come to a perception of the fact that her "art collection" was not, any more than its mistress, an object of the first importance to New York. But Vance had been always associated in her mind with the incipient stages of enlightenment, and she loved him accordingly. Her love for Vance's sister, Mrs. Clifton, who refused to pay her tribute, and belonged to the new "smart set," was even less. 14

Upon Mrs. Myrtle, Vance now resolved to pay a long-deferred duty-call. Admitted by an old negro butler, he was left alone in the large darkling drawing-room, in the shade of the crimson curtains, amid the ghostly ranks of the statues, to ruminate until Mrs. Myrtle should make her appearance. Little thought did he bestow upon the duration of this ordeal. He was well occupied, and, for once in his life, heartily ashamed,——first, of his indecision upon the Ainger door-steps, and, secondly, of the fact that he had put in here to gain courage to return there.

Mrs. Myrtle's heavy tread upon her own parquet floor aroused him from meditation. His aunt was a massive lady, who wore black velvet, with a neck-ruff of old point-lace; who, never pretty, and no longer pleasant to look upon, yet carried herself with a certain ease born of assurance in her own place in life, and cultivated by many years of receiving visitors. Her small white hand, twinkling with diamonds, was extended to him with something of the grand air he remembered his mother, who was the beauty of her family, to have possessed; and then Mrs. Myrtle, seating herself, fixed an unsmiling gaze upon her nephew. 15

"I—ah—thought I would look in and see how you are getting on," he said, with an attempt at jocularity.

"But it is not Thursday," she answered, cold as before. "I make it a point to see no one except on Thursday, or after five. And it is not yet after five."

Townsend, who could not dispute this fact, was at a loss how to go on. But Mrs. Myrtle, having put things upon the right footing, launched at once into an exposition of her grievances against him, his sister, and the ruling society of latter-day New York.

"I am sure if any one had told your mother and me, when we first came out, what people were to push *us* against the wall, and to have all New York racing and tearing after their invitations, we should never have believed it. It's enough to make your poor mother come back from the dead, to revise Anita Clifton's visiting-list. And I suppose the next thing to hear of will be your marriage into one of these bran-new families. I must say, Theodore, although it is seldom my opinion is listened to, I *was* pleased when I heard, the other day, that you were reported engaged to Katherine Ainger. The Aingers are of our own sort; and her fortune, although it is not so important to you, will be handsome. She is one of the few girls who go much into the world who still remember to come to see me; and she has been lunching here to-day." 16

"Really?" said Vance, turning over his hat in what he felt to be a most perfunctory way.

"Yes; if you or Anita Clifton had been here in the last two months, you might have found out that I have had a young lady—a Southern cousin—stopping in the house."

"A cousin of mine?" queried the young man, indifferently.

"My first cousin's daughter, Evelyn Carlyle. You know there was a break between the families about the beginning of the war, and, for one reason or another, we have hardly met since. When I went to the Hot Springs for my rheumatism last year,—you and Anita Clifton doubtless are not aware that I have been a great sufferer from rheumatism,—I stopped a night or two at Colonel Carlyle's house in Virginia, and took rather a fancy to this girl. I found out that she has a voice, and desired to cultivate it in New York, and so invited her to come on after Christmas and stay in my house." 17

Vance was conscious of a slight feeling of somnolence. Really, he could not be expected to care for the Virginian cousin's voice. And Aunt Myrtle had such a soporific way of drawling out her sentences! He wished she would return to the subject of her luncheon-guest, and then, perhaps, he might manage to keep awake.

"So you invited Miss Ainger to-day, to keep the young lady company?" he ventured to observe.

"If you will give me time to explain, I will tell you that Katherine Ainger and she have struck up the greatest friendship this winter, and have been together part of every day. I wish, Vance, that you could bring yourself to extend some attention to your mother's first cousin's child. From Anita Clifton I expect nothing—absolutely nothing. Not belonging to the 'smart set,' whatever that may be, I make no demands upon Anita Clifton. But you, Vance, have not yet shown that you are absolutely heartless. When Eve goes home, as she soon will, it would be gratifying to have 18

her able to say you had recognized her existence."

"I will leave a card for the young lady in the hall," he said, awkwardly; "and perhaps she would allow me to order some flowers for her. Just now, Aunt Myrtle, I have an engagement, and I must really be going on."

He had risen to his feet, and Mrs. Myrtle was about shaping a last arrow to aim at him, when the door opened, and a girl came into the room.

"Oh! Cousin Augusta," she said, in the most outspoken manner, a slight Southern accent marking some of the syllables enunciated in a remarkably sweet voice, "I have been taking your Dandie Dinmont for a walk, and he has been such a good, obedient dear, you must give him two lumps of sugar when he comes to tea at five o'clock." 19

As Mrs. Myrtle performed the ceremony of introduction between them, Vance became conscious that he was in the presence of one of the most radiantly pretty young persons who had ever crossed the line of his languid vision. Equipped in a tailor-made frock of gray serge, a black hat with many rampant plumes upon her red-brown hair, a boa of black ostrich feathers curling around her pearly throat and caressing the rosiest of cheeks, his Cousin Eve surveyed him with as much indifference as if he had been the veriest casual met in a crowd in Fifth Avenue. Two fingers of a tiny gloved hand were bestowed on him in recognition of their relationship, after which she resumed her interrupted talk about the dog.

"You understand that Mr. Townsend is a relative, my dear?" asked Mrs. Myrtle, in her rocking-horse manner. "You have heard me speak of him?" 20

"Yes; oh, yes, certainly," Eve said, with preoccupation. "But to us Virginians a cousin means either very much—or very, very little."

"The presumption, then, is against me?" he asked, determined not to be subdued.

"Is it? I had not thought," she answered, hardly looking in his direction. Vance took the hint and his departure. When again out of doors, he straightened himself, and walked with a firmer, more determined tread, conscious of a little tingling in his veins on the whole not disagreeable. In this mood, he reached the corner of the street in which dwelt Miss Ainger, and was very near indeed to passing it, but, recovering himself with a start, turned westward from the Avenue, and again sought the house from which he had gone irresolute a little while before.

The door was opened for him by a servant, who did not know "for sure," but "rather thought" Miss Ainger was in the drawing-room. While following the man across a wide hall, Vance espied, lying upon a chair, a man's hat—not the conventional high black hat of the afternoon caller, but a rusty brown "pot" hat, of an unobtrusive pattern. 21

"Humph! the piano-tuner, no doubt," he said to himself, and simultaneously recalled the fact that he had seen the object in question, or its twin brother, that same day. Before the footman could put his hand upon the knob of the drawing-room door, it opened, and the owner of the hat came out. It was indeed Crawford, dressed in morning tweeds, as Vance had seen him at luncheon in the Lawyers' Club, his plain, strong face illuminated with an expression Vance knew nothing akin to, and therefore did not interpret.

But Vance did know Miss Ainger for an independent in her set, a girl who struck out for herself to find clever and companionable people with whom to fraternize; and he was accordingly not surprised to meet Crawford here as a visitor. As once before that day, the two men exchanged silent nods, and parted. Vance found Miss Ainger caressing with dainty fingertips a large bunch of fresh violets that lay in her lap and filled the room with fragrance. 22

Kitty Ainger, a daughter of New York, calm, reserved, temperamentally serious, fond of argument upon high themes, cultivated in minor points to a fastidious degree, handsome in a sculptural way, had always seemed to him lacking in the one grace of womanly tenderness he vaguely felt to be of vast moment in a young man's choice for a wife.

To-day, as she greeted him, her manner was gentle and gracious to perfection. Perhaps it so appeared in contrast to that of the fair Phyllida who had flouted him in his Aunt Myrtle's drawing-room; perhaps Kitty was really glad of this first occasion in many days when they were alone together, undisturbed.

The thought caused a wave of excitement to rise in the suitor's veins. He wondered how he could have held back, an hour before, when upon the threshold of such an opportunity. But then, had he made appearance, no doubt there would have been other visitors,—Crawford, for instance, whom Miss Ainger was plainly taking by the hand, to lead into society, as clever girls will do when they find an unknown clever man; Crawford, who did not know enough of conventionality to put on a black coat when he called on a girl in the afternoon; Crawford, poor and plain, a man's man, whom the Ainger family no doubt regarded as one of Kitty's freaks. Yes, Crawford would have been a decided interruption to this *tête-à-tête*. 23

Now, there was an open sea before Vance, and he had only to launch the boat, so long delayed, a craft he at last candidly believed to be freighted with the best hopes of his life. They talked for awhile upon impersonal subjects—Kitty exerting herself, he could see, to be agreeable and sympathetic with her visitor. In the progress of this conversation, he took note with satisfaction of the artistic elegance of her dress (of the exact color of the Peach Blow Vase, he said to himself,

searching for a simile in tint), with sleeves of sheenful velvet, and a silken train that lay upon the rug. Her long, white fingers, playing with the violets, wore no rings. Her slim figure, her braids of pale brown hair, her calm, gray eyes, attracted him as never before, with their girlish and yet womanly composure. 24

"Why have you never told me," he said abruptly, "of your friendship with that little witch of a Virginia cousin of mine who has been staying with Mrs. Myrtle this winter?"

"If you wish me to tell you the truth, it was because she asked me never to do so," replied Kitty, coloring a little. "You have met her?" she added eagerly.

"Yes, to-day; a little while ago, when I called upon my aunt. But how could she know of me? What reason was there for her to avoid me?"

"Evelyn is an impulsive creature," was the answer; and now the blood rushed into Kitty's cheek, and she was silent.

"Impulsive, yes; but how could she resent a man she had never seen; who had not had the smallest opportunity to prove whether or not he was obnoxious to her? That is quite too ridiculous, I think. You, who have so much sense, character, judgment, why could not you exercise your influence over this very provincial little person, and teach her that a prejudice is, of all things, petty?" 25

"She is not a provincial little person," said Kitty, with spirit. "And she does not merit that patronizing tone of yours."

"If *you* take her under your wing, she is perfection," he answered lightly, as if the subject were no longer of value for discussion. "But before we begin to differ about her, only tell me if it is my Aunt Myrtle's objection to me as a type that my truculent Cousin Eve has inherited?"

"I hardly think so. Please ask me no questions," the girl said, uncomfortable with blushing.

"As you like. It is veiled in mystery," he said, rather piqued. "At least, you won't mind informing me if she got any of her ideas of me from you. No, that is hardly fair. I will alter it. Did you and she ever speak of me together?"

"What if I tell you yes, and that, every time we met?" exclaimed Miss Ainger, plucking up courage when thus driven into a corner. 26

To her surprise and dismay, Vance took this admission quite otherwise than she had meant it. In Eve's attitude toward him, he thought he read a girlish jealousy of the object preoccupying the affections of her friend.

"I see. I understand," he said, with a gleam in his eyes she had not seen there in all of their acquaintance. Until now, the hearth-rug had been between them. With an animation quite foreign to him, he crossed it, and leaned down to take her hands. At once, Kitty, withdrawing from his grasp, rose to her feet and faced him.

"I think there is some great mistake," she said, very quietly. As Vance gazed at her, he became aware that he had until now never seen the true Kitty Ainger, and that her face was beautiful.

"You repulse me? You have never cared for me?" he said, fiercely.

A wave of color came upon her cheeks, and her eyes dropped before his to the violets in her hand. 27

"I must tell you," she said, after a pause, during which both thought of many things stretching back through many years, "that I have just promised to marry Mr. Crawford." 28

Chapter II

The day of Miss Ainger's marriage with Crawford, which took place in New York, a month later than the events heretofore recorded, found Vance Townsend on horseback in Virginia, following, with no especial purpose, a highway that crosses the Blue Ridge Mountains to descend sharply into the valley of the Shenandoah.

Before leaving home, he had acquitted himself of conventional duty to the bride by ordering to be sent to her the finest antique vase of his collection,—a gem of carved metal that Cellini might have signed,—filled with boughs of white lilac, his card and best wishes accompanying it. Then, with a heart overburdened, as he fancied, with regretful self-reproach, he had turned his back upon the chief might-have-been of his experience.

Katherine, who had, in fact, passed many days in her paternal mansion unsought by him, was now invested with a veil of tender sentiment. In his waistcoat pocket he carried an unfinished poem, addressed to her,—or to an idealized version of Miss Ainger,—which, at intervals on his journey, he would take out and polish and shape with assiduity, forgetting sometimes to sigh over it in his zeal for metrical construction. 29

The morning of the day that was to see the prize he had lost become definitely another's beheld Vance bargaining with a farmer—a former cavalryman in the Confederate service—to ride one of the two horses he had shipped by train from New York, and serve as guide in the war-harried region through which he desired to pass.

The process was a simple one, the sum negligently offered for his services for a day sufficing to cover the expenses of ex-corporal Claggett for a fortnight, and leave a margin to fill his pipe with. Therefore, the rusty squire in attendance (to whom the treat of bestriding a steed like this would have been requital all-sufficient), the riders left the village that had sheltered Townsend for the 30
night, and at once set out to ascend a long and toilsome hill, giving views on every side of an enchanting prospect.

"I don't mean to appear boastful, suh," observed Mr. Claggett, modestly, "an' I ain't travelled much myself out o' this State, but I've heerd people say this 'ere view beats creation."

"It is very fine, certainly, Claggett," replied Vance, halting to look back at the wide expanse of hill and valley mantled with springing green, the far-off, grassy heights serving as pasture for sheep and cows, and scattered with limestone boulders, against which redbud and dogwood in blossom made brilliant patches; with mountains beyond, above, everywhere, and all of that exquisite, velvet-textured shade of blue, so soft and melting it seems to invite caress.

"By Jove! It is well named the Blue Ridge," Vance went on, approvingly.

"Jest there, Mr. Townsend, in that very spot where the old red cow's a-munchin' in the grass, was where Pelham stood when his artillery let fly at them plucky Yankee cavalry that was behind the 31
stone wall firin' like fury at our Confeds."

"And who was Pelham?" asked the visitor, with interest.

"Never heard o' Pelham? Well, I wouldn't 'a' thought it," was the compassionate answer. "Why, suh, he was a boy,—major of artillery—nuthin' but a boy,—an' they killed him early in the war. But he'd the skill an' the sense of an old general; an' there wornt no risk to himself he'd stop at in a fight. He'd just *swipe* vict'ry, every time, suh, Pelham would; an' he was the pride an' idol of our army. Thar! them johnny-jump-ups are growin' where his gun stood, an' he rammin' charges into it with his own hand, when he sent that murderin' volley that made batterin'-rams out o' the stones o' the wall here, an' druv the poor Yankees behind it into Kingdom Come. Things look different to me, suh, now. I was a youngster, then, run mad to git into any kind o' fightin'; but I've got sons o' my own now, an' I can't somehow see the pints in all that killin' we did in our war, like 32
I used to. But I can't think o' fellers like Pelham without wantin' to be in it again, suh.

"Why, at Snicker's Gap (heard o' Snicker's Gap, Mr. Townsend?) that lad, who was commandin' Stuart's horse-artillery, charged on a squadron of cavalry that had been botherin' him with its sharp-shooters, and, with a gun that they'd dragged by hand through the undergrowth, fired a double charge of canister into their reserves. Then, suh, he charged agin,—a reg'lar thunderbolt that sally was,—picked up sev'ral prisoners an' horses, an', limberin' up his gun like wild-fire, hurried back to his first position, his men shoutin' for him all the while."

"Those were stirring days for you, Claggett," said Townsend, whose blood began to answer to the man's enthusiasm.

"Yes, Mr. Townsend, they were so; but you mustn't let me impose on you with my war stories. My present wife, suh,—a young lady I courted in King William, about the age of my oldest daughter, —she won't have me open my mouth 'bout war stories at our house. Says I tire everybody out 33
with my old chestnuts, suh; an' perhaps I do. The ladies like to do a good deal of the talkin' themselves, I've noticed, Mr. Townsend."

With a subdued sigh, Claggett subsided into silence, but not for long. The names of Stuart and Mosby and their officers were ever upon his lips, interspersed with anecdote and gossip concerning the country people whose dwellings were only occasionally seen from the road. Here and there, in the distance, chimneys behind clumps of trees were pointed out as belonging to old inhabitants who had held on to their homes through storm and stress of ill-fortune since the war.

"Since you are from the Nawth, I would like to tell you, suh, that nobody who is anybody among our gentry ever lived in a village. They lived to themselves, suh, an' the further away from each other the better. If you had the time, suh, an' were acquainted with the families, I could show you some places that would surprise you. An' the ladies an' gentlemen, Mr. Townsend, of our best old stock are as fine people as any on God's earth, I reckon. Pity you ain't acquainted, as I said. It 34
would give me pleasure to take you inside some of the gates of our foremost residents."

Vance noted with amusement that Claggett did not assume to be on a social plane with the people he extolled, but had accepted the tradition of their superiority as part of the Virginian creed. Laughing, he joined in the honest fellow's regret at his ineligibility to take rank as a guest in the neighborhood.

"Though it seems to me, Claggett, now that I think of it, I have a kinsman somewhere hereabout. Do you know anything of a family of Carlyles—Colonel Carlyle, I believe they call him?"

Claggett's manner underwent instant transformation.

"Colonel Guy Carlyle, of the Hall, suh?" he exclaimed, eagerly. "That's in the next county, a

matter of twenty or thirty miles from here. I had the luck to serve under the Colonel, Mr. Townsend, and he'd know me if you spoke my name. You'll be goin' that way, suh? We'll strike north from Glenwood, and get there by supper-time." 35

"Hold on, Claggett, you'll be pouring out my coffee and asking me to take more of the Colonel's waffles, presently. Colonel Carlyle married my mother's cousin, but I fancy would not recognize my name as quickly as yours. I have certainly no grounds for venturing to offer myself as an inmate of his house."

"Beg your pardon, suh, but the Colonel'd never get over a relation ridin' so near the Hall an' not stoppin' there to sleep," persisted Claggett. "It's a thing nobody ever heard of, down this way."

"I shall have to brave tradition, then," answered Vance, indifferently.

"It's a fine old place, suh. House built by the Hessian prisoners in the Revolution, and splendid furniture. They do say there's one mirror in the big saloon that covers fourteen foot of wall, Mr. Townsend. Yanks bivouacked in that room, too, but didn't so much as crack it. An' chandeliers, all over danglers like earrings, suh. For all they ain't got such a sight o' money as they had, Miss Eve, she's got a real knack at fixin' up, an' she's travelled Nawth, an' got all the new ideas. You must 'a' met Miss Eve when she was Nawth, Mr. Townsend. Why, suh, she's the beauty o' three counties; nobody could pass *her* in a crowd, or out of it." 36

"I *have* met Miss Carlyle, Claggett," Vance said, growing uncomfortable at the recollection. "But only once, and for a moment. As you say, she is a beautiful young woman."

"Then you *will* stop at the Hall, suh?" pleaded his guide.

"No," said Vance, briefly. "We will go on to Glenwood, and sleep there at the inn. To-morrow, you shall show me as much of the country as I have enjoyed to-day, but I am here for travelling, and not to cultivate acquaintance, understand."

"Up yonder, on the hill-top, suh," observed Mr. Claggett, ignoring rebuke, "when we git through this little village we're comin' to (I was in a red-hot skirmish once, right in the middle of the street, ahead, suh), is a tree we call the Big Poplar. It marks the junction of three counties, an' 'twas there George Washin'ton slept, when he was on his surveyin' tour as a boy, suh—you've heard of General Washin'ton up your way, Mr. Townsend?" 37

"Yes, confound you," said Vance, laughing at his sly look.

"General Lee halted at that point to look at the country round, on his way to Gettysburg. A great friend of Colonel Carlyle was the General, suh; you'll see a fine picture of the General in the dinin'-room at the Hall. Colonel Carlyle lost two brothers followin' Lee into battle, suh, but we call that an honor down here. They do say little Miss Eve keeps the old swords and soldier caps of them two uncles in a sort o' altar in her chamber, suh. Heard the news that Miss Eve's engaged to her cousin, Mr. Ralph Corbin, in Wash'n't'n, suh? It's all over the country, I reckon. He's a young archytec', an' doin' well; but down here nobody knows if a young lady's engaged for sure, till the day's set for the weddin'." 38

At this point Vance interrupted his garrulous guide to suggest that they should seek refreshment for man and beast in the hamlet close at hand; and the diversion this created turned Claggett from the apparently inexhaustible subject of the Carlyles.

They rode onward, the genial sun, as it mounted higher in the heaven, serving to irradiate, not overheat, the beautiful earth.

From this point the road went creeping up, by gentle degrees, to the summit of the mountain, beyond which Shenandoah cleft their way in twain. Traversing Ashby's Gap, the efflorescence of the woods, the music of many waters, the balm of purest air, confirmed Vance's satisfaction in his choice of an expedition. Descending the steep grade to the river, they crossed the classic stream upon the most primitive of flat ferry-boats, and on the further side passed almost at once into a rich, agricultural country, upon a well-kept turnpike, where the horses trotted rapidly ahead.

Claggett, strange to say, did not resume allusions to the Carlyle family; but upon reaching a certain cross-road, he ventured an appealing glance at his employer. 39

"Turn to the right here, to get a short cut to Carlyle Hall, suh."

"Where does the left road take us?" asked Vance, shortly.

"You *kin* git to Glenwood that way, Mr. Townsend. But it's a roundabout way, an' a new road, an' a pretty bad one, an' it's just in the opposite direction from Colonel—"

Vance answered him by riding to the left.

A new road, with a vengeance, and one apparently bottomless, the horses at every step plunging deeper into clinging, red-clay mud; but the obstinacy of Vance kept him riding silently ahead, and the trooper, with a quizzical look upon his weather-beaten face, followed. Miles, traversed in this fashion, brought them into the vicinity of a small gathering of houses, at sight of which Vance spoke for the first time in an hour.

"Claggett."

"Yes, suh?" This, deferentially. 40

"If I ever go back of my own free will over that infernal piece of road"—he paused for a sufficiently strong expression.

"Yes, suh?" said Claggett, expectantly.

"You may write me down an ass."

"Yes, *suh*," Claggett exclaimed, with what Vance thought a trifle too much alacrity. "Better let me go befo' you for a little piece, Mr. Townsend," added the countryman. "Just where the road slopes down to the crick, here, it's sorter treacherous, if you don't know the best bit."

Vance, choosing to be deaf, kept in front. He traversed the creek in safety; but, in ascending the other side, his horse plunged knee-deep into a quagmire,—throwing his rider, who arose none the worse except for a plaster of red mud,—and emerged evidently lamed.

"He's all right, suh, excep' for a little strain," said the ex-trooper, after his experienced eye and hand had passed over Merrylad's injuries.

"We will go at once to the hotel in the village, and get quarters for the night," said Vance, ruefully. "I've a change of clothes in that bag you carry, so I don't mind for myself. But I wouldn't 41
have Merrylad the worse for this for anything."

"The trouble is, Mr. Townsend," answered Claggett, "that you may get quarters fit for a horse here, but you won't be stoppin' yourself, I'll tell you."

"Nonsense! Come along! You lead Merrylad; I'm glad to stretch my legs by a walk," and the young man started off at a good pace, plashing ever through liquid mire, that overflowed street and so-called sidewalk.

There was no sign of an inn of any kind. A few dilapidated houses of the poorest straggled on either side the street, at the end of which they came upon a country store and post-office combined. Three or four mud-splashed horses hitched to a rock; as many mud-splashed loungers upon tilted chairs on the platform before the door. That was all.

"Better take 'em on to old Josey's, Charley," called out a friendly voice to Claggett.

"Yes, old Josey will do the correct thing by them," remarked a full-bearded, sunburned gentleman, who, seated astride of a mule, now came "clopping" toward them through the mud, 42
from the opposite direction.

"I am really afraid, Mr. Townsend," Claggett said, persuasively, "that we shall be forced to go on a mile or so further, to old Josey's."

"And who in the thunder *is* old Josey?" exclaimed Vance, testily.

"Never heard o' him up Nawth, suh?" answered the trooper, with a twinkle in his eye. "He's the big person o' this part,—an old bachelor,—Mr. Joseph Lloyd, who runs the best farms and raises the best stock in the neighborhood. The truth is, not many visitors come here, unless they are booked for Mr. Lloyd's."

"What claim have I on him, unless I can pay my night's lodging and yours? I will leave you and the lame horse here, and make my way back to-night to Glenwood."

"To get to Glenwood, you'd have to pass over right smart of that mire we came through," said Claggett, pensively.

"Then, in Heaven's name, let us go to Josey's," said Vance, laughing, in spite of his bad humor. 43

They bade farewell to the village, and went off as they had come, Vance choosing to walk, the trooper leading the lame horse.

And now, in defiance of his plight, his melancholy appearance, the accident to his favorite, Vance yielded himself to the spell of a region that became at every moment, as he advanced, more wildly beautiful. The sun, about to set, sent a flood of radiance over hills high and low, over a broken rolling country dominated by the massive shaft of Massanutton Mountain, rising like a tower above his lesser brethren. That the "mile or two further on" stretched into four or five, the young man cared not a jot. His lungs filling with crisp, invigorating air, he strode forward, and was almost sorry when the dormer-windows of an old house shrouded by locust-trees in bloom appeared upon a plateau across intervening fields.

"Now for my best cheek!" he said to himself. "What *am* I to say to old Josephus? Ask for lodging, 44
like the tramp I look? Hang it! I believe I'll sleep under the nearest haystack, rather!"

While thus absorbed, Mr. Theodore Vance Townsend, the fine flower of various clubs, did not perceive that he was an object of varying interest and solicitude to three persons looking over the fence of a pasture near-by, where cattle were enclosed.

Two elderly gentlemen surveyed him closely. A girl, who had tossed a glance at him over her shoulder, seemed to find more attraction in the Alderney heifer, whose saucy rough tongue was at that moment stretched out to lick salt from a velvet palm, than in the mud-stained wayfarer.

"That's no common tramp," said one of the gentlemen to the other. "If you will stay here with my Lady-love, I'll just go and investigate his case."

Vance Townsend had, perhaps, like other mortals, known his "bad moments" in life. But he felt that there had been few like this, when the old gentleman, issuing through a gate opening from the pasture, came to him with a quick, decided step. 45

The younger man took off his hat. The older did likewise. And then Vance, between a laugh and a groan, told his story, confirmed by the apparition at that moment, in the distance, of the horses and Claggett, who was himself afoot.

"Say no more, my dear fellow, say not another word," interrupted the astonished old gentleman. "My name is Lloyd, and I'm the owner of that house behind the locusts, where I'm delighted to take you in, and Charley Claggett, too. We'll find out what's the matter with your horse, quick enough. Welcome to Wheatlands, sir, and just come along with me."

Before Vance fairly knew how, he found himself in a "prophet's chamber," looking upon a sloping roof, where a martin was nesting within reach of his hand. Tapping the panes of the upper sash of his window, a branch tasselled with sweet-smelling blossoms swayed in the breeze. Outside, he had a wide and glorious view of field and mountains. Inside, he possessed a clean, if homely, bedroom, at the door of which a soft-voiced negro woman was already knocking, to ask for his bespattered garments. 46

Vance was delighted. When he furthermore found left at his portal a tub with a large bucket of ice-cold water from the spring, together with his bag, he began to think that Virginia hospitality was not to be relegated among things traditional.

The soft Virginia dusk was closing upon the scene, when our young man, leaving his room, went down-stairs, through a hall hung with trophies and implements of sport, and out of an open door upon the "front porch," to look at the evening star hanging above the mountain crest. In this occupation he found another person indulging likewise, and in the clear gloom discovered the face and figure of a young and singularly graceful girl, who without hesitation accosted him.

"Mr. Lloyd has told us of your mishap," she said, courteously. "He is congratulating himself that it happened near enough to let him help you out of it. I hope the horse will fare as well as the master." 47

"Merrylad will be all right, thank you, so Claggett has been up to tell me. It appears that Mr. Lloyd, in addition to his other attractions, is a famous amateur vet."

"You will find he has all the virtues," she said, laughing. At that moment, a lamp, lighted by the servant in the hall, sent a stream of illumination upon them. To Townsend's utter surprise, he saw the face of his cousin, Evelyn Carlyle.

"You!" he heard her say, in a not too well pleased tone; and "You?" he repeated, with what he felt to be not a distinguished success.

"How extraordinary that it should turn out to be you!" she began again, first of the two to recover her composure. "Did you think—were you, that is, on your way to visit *us*?"

"Nothing was further from my thoughts," he answered, bluntly. "I, on the contrary, believed myself to be going in the opposite direction from where you live." 48

"Of course," she said, somewhat piqued. "It is impossible you should have known that papa and I came yesterday on a visit to dear old Cousin Josephus. I beg your pardon if I was very rude."

"It is certainly not a welcome that seems inspired by what I have been led to think is Virginia cordiality," he answered, coolly.

"But I have asked your pardon, and that's not the way to answer me. You might grant it, never so stiffly; and after that, we, being thrown together this way through no fault of either of us, might agree to be decently civil before papa, who can have no idea how I feel toward—I mean what my reasons are for feeling—well, never mind what I mean," she ended, vexed at his immobility.

"I quite join with you in thinking it would be very silly to take any one else into this armed neutrality of ours. I shall at the earliest moment, to-morrow, relieve you of my presence. Suppose, until then, you try to treat me as you would another unoffending man under my circumstances."

"Yes. You are right. It would be better, and it would not worry papa and Cousin Josephus," she said, reflectively. "Well, then, if you were another man, I should begin by asking you what brought you to Virginia. No; that would not be at all polite, would it? I think I shall just say nothing at all." 49

"Not till you let me assure you that I came because a fellow I know told me he had made a driving tour in this part, last year, with his wife, and had found it rather nice—and another reason was, that I wanted to get away from myself."

"You are very flattering to our State," she said, bridling her head after a fashion he found both comical and sweet. She was silent a little while, then resumed, more gently:

"I was thinking of what you last said, and maybe I have done you an injustice. Maybe you are to

be pitied more than blamed."

"Do you mean because I spoiled a good suit of clothes and hurt my horse's leg?"

"No; not that. You are clearly not in need of sympathy. There! They are going to ring the supper-bell, and you must go and be introduced to my father, as his cousin. He is the dearest daddy in the world, and will be sure to try to make you come to visit us at the Hall." 50

"Am I to understand this is a hint not to accept?"

"I *could* stay on here, you know," she said, in a businesslike way.

"You are perfectly exasperating," he exclaimed, and then the summons came to go into the house. Just before they crossed the threshold, she appeared to have undergone another change of mind. Turning back swiftly, in a voice of exceeding sweetness she breathed into his ear these words:

"Please, I am sorry. I ought not to keep forgetting, ought I, that you are a stranger within our gates, and a cousin, really?"

"Is she a coquette?" Vance began to ask himself, but was interrupted by a *sortie* of his host in search of him. 51

Chapter III

Vance Townsend had reckoned without his host when he made the declaration that he would relieve Miss Carlyle of his presence the following day. The kind owner of Wheatlands, indulgent to every man and beast upon his premises, had yet a way of holding on to and controlling guests that none might resist.

Vance, however, did not try very hard to resist the invitation to stay at least until "Thursday, when the Carlyles would be running away home." An evening spent with the kind, simple, yet cultivated people who formed the little *coterie* at Wheatlands (there was among them a widowed cousin with her unruly boy, and a cousin who had been unfortunate in his investments) had, somehow, quite upset our hero's notions upon many points.

Claggett, dismissed with a *douceur*, the liberality of which consoled that worthy countryman for an early reunion with the lady who would not allow him to tell stories of the war, took an affectionate leave of his employer. In his manner Vance detected more satisfaction in the vindication of Virginia customs than regret at the severance of their relation. The little triumph Claggett might readily have derived from the incident of the wayfarer's meeting, in spite of himself, with his relations was heroically suppressed. And before Townsend had turned upon his pillow the morning after his arrival, a telegram had gone to the town where his luggage had been left, ordering it to be sent by train that day. 52

Vance had been told that breakfast would be at nine; and, awakened at half-past seven by a bird on the bough in his window, he abandoned himself to a lazy review of his impressions of the family. Of his Cousin Eve he had seen little more than what has already been told. After filling her place at a bounteous supper-table, where the talk was chiefly absorbed by the three gentlemen, she had vanished, in company with the widowed cousin, and was invisible thereafter —the men sitting together till midnight in the large, raftered hall, with a fire in its wide chimney, that served the old bachelor for a general living-room. 53

Vance could not remember to have seen a face of finer lines, a manner of finer courtesy, than that of his seventy-year-old host, who, in spite of the rust of desuetude in worldly ways, carried his inbred gentility where all who approached him might profit by it.

That he was a politician went without saying; and, indeed, the talk once directed in the channel of national government had kept there until they separated. On a claw-footed table holding a lamp beside Mr. Lloyd's easy chair, covered with frayed haircloth, Vance saw lying a crisp new Review of English publication, and all about were piled newspapers and magazines, while shelves displayed row upon row of the antique, tawny volumes that had made up the complete library of a country gentleman in the days of old Josephus's grandfather.

Around the hearth, coming and going with every opening of many doors, gathered dogs of fine and varied breeds. One old patriarch of a St. Bernard, who attached himself particularly to the stranger, had remained close to Vance's feet, and gravely escorted him to bed. 54

In his kinsman, Guy Carlyle, a handsome man of fifty odd years, who in a military youth had been noted for deeds of daring that rang through the army of Northern Virginia, but had long since resigned himself to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, Vance saw the origin of Eve's rare beauty. He also became aware that, of a large family of sons and daughters born to the now widowed Colonel, Eve was the sole survivor; and it did not need the expression that irradiated her father's face when her name was touched upon to show in what estimation she was held by him.

The tinge of melancholy in Mr. Carlyle's manner had, however, no effect like repression of the cordial friendliness he extended to the newcomer. Vance had gone to rest with a feeling that he

had conferred a genuine favor upon his two elders by according to them, as he had, his company.

Spite of these conditions of good-fellowship, he awoke next morning conscious that there was one under the roof with him who had the power (and no desire to withhold it) to make him far from comfortable; to puzzle him, to banter him, to pull him up with a jerk at the moment he might feel that he was getting reasonably ahead with her; to punish him, it would appear, for some offence he could not own to having committed.

It was very clear that Eve thought him a poor fellow, mentally and morally; that, apart from her specific grudge against him, of nature unknown, she was not in the least inclined to pay tribute to his position, fashion, culture, wealth,—the appendages of Vance Townsend's personality people around him had always been disposed to make so much of. In the firmament of American society, he took himself to be a planet of first importance. In other lands, he had enjoyed more than a reasonable share of social success. Why should he here, for the first time in his life, feel like a man coming in fancy costume to a dinner where all the other guests wore plain clothes?

It must be the doing of that girl. She it was who, with a few words, a cool glance or two that appeared to read his soul, had brought him into this strait; and Vance was still young enough to feel himself flame with resentment of her. Then fell upon his mental ear the soft cadence of her voice, asking his pardon for having possibly misjudged him, and his anger passed.

As from Eve he went on to think of Kitty Ainger, now Mrs. Crawford, Vance was surprised at the freedom from soreness the reflection left upon his mind. Mrs. Crawford, he even reflected, was really an admirable woman—just the wife, as everybody had said, for a rising fellow like Crawford, who would surely reach the top! She had shown her good sense in taking him. Was it possible Vance had ever thought anything else?

On a table near the bed lay the contents of a pocket emptied overnight—among them a folded paper, inscribed with the latest and most satisfactory draft of his verses to Kitty. This he now seized, and, upon re-reading it, a flush that was not of tender consciousness overspread his face. Regardless of the loss to the world of poetry, ignoring the recurrent efforts that Calliope had witnessed, he deliberately tore it up, and went to the open window prepared to scatter the tiny remnants upon a matin breeze.

A view of wide green plains, with here and there a clump of noble trees, of soaring blue hills beyond them, all shining in the morning sun, met his eye; and almost directly beneath his window were a couple of horses, of which one was bestridden by old Josephus, in a nankeen coat and venerable Panama hat; the other, little more than a colt, was held by a negro and saddled for a woman's use.

"Lady-love! Lady-love, I say!" called out the old gentleman, in a voice of Stentor.

"Coming, coming, come!" gaily answered somebody; and in a moment Vance's Cousin Eve appeared.

Springing lightly upon the segment of an enormous tree that served as horse-block, she dropped into her saddle, and devoted herself to subduing the juvenile remonstrance of her steed.

With the fragments of his effusion to Kitty Ainger still in hand, Vance felt a curious sensation, as though the old world had suddenly become young and beautiful and tuneful; and then, from his ambush, he heard Josephus say:

"I'd half a mind to rouse up our visitor, and take him with us to see the sheep in Six-Acre Lot. The ride before breakfast would have given him a good idea of the way my land lies."

"O Cousin Josey, I am so thankful you did *not*!" answered Eve, with sincerity unmistakable.

"Tut, tut, my dear child," began Mr. Lloyd, rebukingly; but Eve, who just then succeeded in starting her colt in the right direction, was off and away, sending back a trill of laughter to her ancient cavalier, who made good speed to follow her.

The new conviction of his folly in having agreed to remain under the same shelter with Miss Carlyle did not prevent Mr. Townsend from making his appearance with an excellent appetite at the breakfast-table, whither he was duly escorted by Bravo, the old dog he had found outside his bedroom door waiting to take him in charge.

With Bravo and another dog or two at heel, Vance had walked off his pique over dew-washed slopes of short, rich grass to a summit near the house, to be joined on the return by Colonel Carlyle, who had strolled out to meet him.

Breakfasts at Wheatlands were justly considered the *chefs d'œuvre* of old Josey's cook. Vance, helping himself to quickly succeeding dainties seen for the first time, cast a mental glance backward to the egg and a cup of tea that formed his accustomed meal at home. Half-way in the repast, Eve, who had been changing her habit to a pretty cotton gown, slipped into place between her father and the widow, who was pouring out the coffee.

"What! What!" said Cousin Josey, detecting her absence from a seat at his side, that would have brought her face to face with Townsend. "My Lady-love desert me like that? Come back, little runaway, and see your Cousin Vance taste his first mouthful of a Wheatlands ham!"

Thus adjured, Eve could but take the seat indicated; and Vance, who had determined to be no

longer oppressed by so small and pink a person, bestowed on her an openly admiring glance that angered her anew.

"We must leave you to Eve's mercies this morning, Mr. Townsend," observed their host, at the conclusion of the repast. "Carlyle and I have promised to ride over to the County Court to hear a case tried, and to call on the Judge, who is an old college chum of the Colonel's. We shall be home to dinner at two, and you young people must entertain each other until then."

"Could you not manage not to show so plainly what you feel?" asked Vance in his cousin's little ear, as they left the table. "Pray believe that I am not a party to the infliction put upon you."

They had strolled bareheaded out under the trees shading the lawn about the house.

"Shall we never have done quarrelling?" said Eve, wearily. "Just as I think I begin to feel kindly toward you, something happens, and I break down again." 61

"Were we not moderately successful last night, when I assumed to be somebody else?" he asked.

"Yes; that is better. I will treat you as I would any other man stopping here—any one not of your exalted class, I mean."

"That was a quite unnecessary taunt. But I will allow it to pass if you agree for to-day—until the gentlemen return—to treat me as you would Mr. Ralph Corbin, for example."

"What do you mean?" she asked, quickly. "Ralph is the dearest, most obliging cousin I have, and I impose upon him dreadfully. If he were here, I should begin by sending him indoors to fetch my hat and parasol from the hall rack, and a new magazine I left in the window-seat, and tell him to call the dogs to come with us—What! *you* can't intend to condescend to wait upon a mere girl, a country cousin?"

He was off and back again with the articles demanded, showing no enmity in the smile offered with them to her acceptance. But he did not at once surrender the periodical, or until he had satisfied himself of the contents of the page held open by a marker of beaten silver. 62

"You don't mind my looking at what you read?" he asked.

"If you like. It is some verses—*not* what *you* would care for, in the least, but they have given me great pleasure."

A glance showed him that his suspicion was correct. The stanzas in question had been written by him some months before, and sent, unsigned, to the editor.

"Will you tell me what you fancy in these?" he said, with fine indifference of manner.

"Why does one like a flower, or worship a star? They suit me, I suppose, and I am learning them by heart."

His own heart throbbed with a schoolboy's glee and pride. But he said nothing, and walked beside her light figure, in the round of garden and orchard, bringing up in the stable-yard. Here, a space paved with grass-grown cobblestones was bounded on three sides by frame structures, now, in their decay, as gray and as fragile-looking as hornets' nests. 63

"And the little house built of limestone, with one window, was put up in Colonial days, for refuge in case of an Indian raid. Mr. Lloyd will tell you one of his best stories, about an adventure of his ancestor in there, when three white men successfully resisted a band of red-skins. Perhaps our aboriginal anecdotes would bore you, however. If so, give us only a little hint, and we desist. Now, shan't we go in and see your horses?"

She lifted the latch; Vance followed her, past stalls where the occupants gave her immediate recognition, to those in which his own pair were comfortably ensconced. Merrylad, ungallant fellow, would have none of the young lady, but at the touch and voice of his master, turned his beautiful head sidewise to lay it upon Vance's shoulder with affection.

"I am, at last, an illustration of the legend, 'Some one to love me,'" he said, laughing. "So you thought I had forsaken you, old man? Not I, my beauty. Gently, gently, you are too demonstrative." 64

"I can't imagine life without horses and dogs; can you?" she said, with the quickly growing comradeship of a child. "There; I was determined that Merrylad should let me stroke his neck!"

From the stables, whose inmates seemed to have put them upon a better footing, they passed again under the pink-blossomed arcades of an apple-orchard, to pause beside a curious indentation, like a dimple, in the turf.

"Just here," began Evelyn,—"but I shall not tell you, unless you promise to be properly impressed,—a sad fate overcame a dishonest negro servant of Mr. Lloyd's ancestor. He—the servant, I mean—was a fellow much given to acrobatic feats, and was accustomed to divert his master's guests by tumbling and turning cart-wheels. One day, he robbed old Mr. Lloyd's money-chest, and filling his pockets, went out in the orchard, and testified his glee by standing on his head."

"What happened? Evidently something of a supernatural nature."

"The earth opened, and out came a great hairy red hand," said Eve, "(I am telling it to you as my 65

nurse told it to me) and 'cotched him by de hayde, and drawed him down.'"

"What evidence do they offer of this event?"

"That is the thrilling part. About fifty years ago, when the present owner was just of age, some men at work in this place dug up a treasure of golden 'cob-coins,' clipped here and there to regulate their value, as the custom was in olden days. And there, wedged in the earth where the gold lay scattered, was the skeleton of a man standing upon his head!"

"Proof positive," said Vance, laughing.

"I thought I should convince you. As an actual fact, the coins brought six hundred dollars at the Philadelphia mint, and the money was distributed among the finders."

"Imagine how many darkeys have stolen out here, since, to work at night with pick and shovel! I suppose that accounts for the depression of the sod."

"I myself found a George II. coin in the garden yesterday. See! If I were to give it to you, do you think it would bind you to continue to be 'some one else,' during the rest of your stay with us?" 66

He took the bit of copper she held out, wondering, as he had done the night before, whether this kindly mood meant coquetry, then deciding it was but the frolic spirit of a wholesome and untrammelled youth not to be restrained. Whatever it meant, he would profit by it. A creature so bright, so impulsive as this, his new-found cousin, was not within his ken, even if the occasional prick of her wit did keep him in an attitude of self-defence.

"Her cheeks are true apple-blossoms," he found himself murmuring, irrelevantly, as he pursued her through the tunnel of orchard boughs. "But her lips—what? Ah! bard beloved, I thank you —'Her mouth a crimson flower.' That's it. 'Her mouth a crimson flower.'"

"What are you talking about, back there?" exclaimed his guide, turning sharply to call him to account.

"Did I speak aloud? I was—ah—only wondering where we are going to bring up?" 67

"Do I tire you? Perhaps you are not used to walking. Never mind; we shall soon reach the graveyard, and then you can sit upon the stone wall and rest."

"I think I can last to the graveyard," meekly said the young man, whose tramps in the Alps and Dolomites and Rockies had included of "broken records" not a few.

"Now, you are laughing at me," she said, suspiciously. "But you know I have never heard of you except as a lounger in clubs and a leader of *cotillons*."

Vance thought it useless to protest.

They now reached an enclosure under a grove of maples, where, motioning him to sit upon a low wall tapestried with moss and fern and creepers, she perched upon the gnarled root of a tree, and, opening her book, prepared to become absorbed in it.

"Suppose you read aloud to me," he suggested, with cunning aforethought.

"This?" she said, doubtfully, surveying his verses. "Oh, no; I think not. You would hardly care for *this*. It is something quite out of your line, don't you see? The writer gives expression to a perfectly straightforward, yet eloquent, expression of a true man's true feeling, about a thing of every day. It is not only that the words are lovely and the sentiment is noble, but the measure ripples like a stream—Why, what is the matter with you? One would think you know the author." 68

"I am afraid, upon reflection, that I *do not* know the author," he said, drawing back into his shell.

"If you did, I should get you to thank him for me for this," she resumed. "They say authors are always disappointing to meet, after one has idealized them through their writings. But *he* would not be. No; I would trust him, through everything, to be a noble gentleman. Of course he is unworldly. I believe he lives in a remote Territory, and despises petty conventionalities of society, especially those in New York. And I think he never even heard of that dreadful 400 of yours." 69

Vance, smiling at her girlish nonsense, felt himself, nevertheless, lapped in the Elysium of her speech.

Then her mood changed to pathos, as she told him the story of "Cousin Josey's" single episode of love, ending in the mound beside them, where slept the old man's bride-betrothed of seventeen,—a ward of his mother,—who had died of a tragic accident, forty years agone.

"And every day, since, he has come here. See, there are fresh wood-violets upon her breast. And the dear old man has never thought of such a thing as giving her a successor. Now, let us go. There are lambs to show you, and a lot of other things."

The passing cloud was gone from her April face. She was again radiant, and in some bedazzlement of mind he arose and followed her.

Townsend's acquaintance with his Virginia cousins had, as might have been expected, prolonged itself into a visit to Carlyle Hall; and he was on the eve of departure, after a stay of two weeks in 70

that delightful refuge, before he realized how much his fancy had begun to twine around the place and its inmates.

Sentiment for the young creature who was its ruling spirit he did not admit, other than the natural tribute of his age and sex to hers. Nor did he give her credit for more than temporary feeling on any point disconnected with her strong local attachments. Her father, her home, and those she grandiosely called her "people"—meaning, he supposed, the individuals indebted to Providence for having been born within the limits of her State—were the objects of Eve's warm affection.

Vance felt sure her courteous thought of him was the result of only transmitted consideration for a guest. So soon as he should quit the pleasant precincts of the Hall, he feared he must put aside his claim to even this consideration. This condition of affairs worried our young man more than he cared to admit to himself. To no one else would he have confessed that the fortnight had been spent by him in a daily effort to impress upon her a personality widely different from her conception of it. Now, at the end of his enterprise, he was conscious that he had not advanced in 71
the endeavor; and this last evening in her company was correspondingly depressing to his *amour propre*.

They were sitting together in a window-seat of the drawing-room, looking into an old-world garden with box walks, a sun-dial, and a blaze of tulips piercing the brown mold. From the western sky, facing them, the red light was vanishing, and in the large, dim room a couple of lamps made islands of radiance in a sea of shadows. In the library, adjoining, sat the Colonel, reading, his strong, handsome head seen in profile from where they were.

Sounds of evening in the country, the sweet whistle of a negro in the distance, alone broke the spell of silence brooding over the old house. Vance hesitated to further disturb it, the more so that Evelyn had been in a mood of unusual graciousness. Nor did he, in truth, feel prepared to broach the discussion of certain things he had put off until now.

"To-morrow," he said at last, with a genuine sigh, "I shall be on my way northward, and this 72
beautiful, restful life will be among my has-beens."

"Too restful, I'm afraid," she cried, in her brusque, schoolgirl fashion. "Your Aunt Myrtle always speaks of Virginia as nothing but a 'cure,' which she is clearly glad to have accomplished and lived down."

"It has been a cure for me in another sense. I wonder if you know what you have done for me?"

"I?"

"Yes. Don't fence with me now. For once, believe in your cousin, who is, after this, going to leave you for a long time in peace. Tell me; when I shall have gone, and that big, comfortable 'spare room' is put in order again for the next guest, shall you sometimes think of the subject of your missionary labors in the past two weeks?"

"But I have never undertaken to reform you," she said, in a vexed tone. "It is absurd for you to think I imagined myself capable of that. The best I could hope for was that your visit should pass without our coming to open conflict. Papa could tell you I promised him to try that this should be 73
so."

"Then I am indebted to your father for the modicum of personal consideration you have vouchsafed me?"

"And Cousin Josey—yes," she answered, with startling candor. "At the same time, I must say, I like you now better than I believed I ever could. It makes me wish with all my heart I could trust you."

Vance felt a sting that was not all resentment, or all pain. The expression of her eyes, so fearless, so intense, waked in him a feeling that, in the moment they had reached, he desired nothing so much in all the world as to win this "mere girl's" approval. The color deepened in his face, as he said:

"And yet you have given the author of those verses, who happens to be myself, credit for something in which you could place faith?"

"You—*you*?" she exclaimed, starting violently. "Ah no! Don't destroy my ideals."

"This may be wholesome, but it is certainly not pleasant," he said, praying Heaven for patience. 74

There was nothing of her customary light spirit of bravado in the manner in which, after a pause, she next spoke to him.

"I hardly know how—for the sake of others, I mean, not on my own account—to ask if it is possible you have not, in connection with me, given a thought to one who was my daily, intimate companion all of last winter."

"That!" he interrupted, with a dry laugh. Why not arraign her for the wreck of me?"

"You understand me, I see," she said, with meaning. "Let me say this, then: that I hold a trifler with women's hearts to be the most despicable of characters. A man who is too indolent or too infirm of purpose to deny himself the pleasure he gets from watching his progress in a girl's

affections is an offender the law mayn't reach, but he deserves it should. That he makes his victim old before her time, in his gradual, refined disappointment of her hopes, may not count for much, in your estimation. But—but—oh! I could not have believed it of the person who wrote those verses!" 75

There were tears in her honest eyes, a tremor in her young voice. Save for these, Vance, who had walked away from her a dozen steps, would have continued to put distance between himself and this "angel at the gate."

As it was, he controlled himself sufficiently to return and say, in a hard, strained voice:

"I shall not attempt to change your estimate of me. But I am glad you have given me an opportunity to tell you that on the day I saw you first, I went directly from my aunt's house to ask Katherine Ainger to be my wife. Some day, when you are older, and know more of the world, and take broader views of poor humanity, all these things may seem to you different. Then you may, perhaps, admit that, with all my faults, I could never be such a cad as you have pictured. In the little time that we are together now, please, let us say no more about it."

He walked away, joining the Colonel, to engage that unsuspecting gentleman in an exhaustive discussion of politics. 76

Eve sat for awhile in her dusky corner, absorbed in thought. She had decided to say a few words to him, before he should go, that might contribute to her relief rather than his. But Vance gave her no opportunity to speak any words to him, except those of conventional farewell. Betimes, next morning, he took leave of his cousins; and the Virginia episode was over.

After he had left, Eve locked herself in her room, and gave way to a burst of tears. 77

Chapter IV

In a railway carriage that had long before left Genoa with the ultimate intention of getting into Rome, a girl sat, tranced in satisfaction, looking from the window, throughout an afternoon of spring. To speed thus leisurely between succeeding pictures of a scenery and life she seemed to recognize from some prior state of existence—although now, in fact, seen for the first time—was a joy sufficient to annihilate fatigue.

The milk-white oxen ploughing the red fields; the peasant women at work amid young vines; the sheets of wild flowers; the pink and white and blue-washed villas, with their terraces and palms and flower-pots; the hedges of roses, and groves of olive and eucalyptus; above all, the classic names of stations, albeit placarded in a commonplace way,—made Miss Evelyn Carlyle, lately a passenger of a steamer arriving at Genoa from America, turn and twist from side to side of the carriage, and flush and thrill with satisfaction, after a fashion causing her father, who accompanied her, to rejoice that they occupied their apartment undisturbed. 78

As evening closed upon the scene, she at last consented to throw her head back upon the cushion of the seat, and admit she was a prey to the mortal consideration of exceeding hunger. Since leaving Genoa, a roll and some cakes of chocolate, only, had supplied the luncheon for a journey of ten hours. Therefore, when the train, stopping after dark at a little buffet, was promptly forsaken by its passengers, Eve and her father joined the eager throng craving refreshment at the hands of a perspiring landlord and his inefficient aids.

"If I could only make these fellows understand, perhaps they would stop to listen," said Colonel Carlyle, growing wroth at the struggling, vociferating, jostling crowd massed in a small room, snatching for food like hungry dogs.

"Allow me to—By Jove, it's the Colonel!" said a voice behind him, whose possessor was trying to pass on. 79

"Ralph Corbin! Where did you drop from?" and, "Ralph, this is too delightful" were the greetings received by the young man thus unexpectedly encountered.

"I am on my way from Nice to Rome to meet—er—some friends who are expected there for the Silver Wedding festivities," said he, with becoming blushes.

"I know," exclaimed Evelyn, gleefully. "I was sure they had something to do with it."

"But it's uncertain whether they have returned from Greece yet; and it's awfully jolly to meet you, anyway, Eve, and the Colonel. Here, let's get some food, and I'll go in your carriage for the rest of the way, of course. I'd not an idea you were coming out this year."

"Nor we, until a fortnight since," said Eve.

Ralph capturing a supply of bread, and fruit, and roast chicken, they made off with their booty to the train, and the evening passed in merry chat and explanation of their plans. Evelyn, however, by no means lost the consciousness of her advance for the first time upon Rome; and when, after crossing the Tiber at midnight, and catching glimpses, on either side the railway, of ruins that heralded their vicinity to the goal of her hopes, she was keyed to high excitement. 80

Ralph laughed at her disappointment as the train ran slowly into a large, modern station lighted by electricity, and decorated with hangings of gold and crimson, a crimson carpet spread across the platform to one of the doors of exit. When they enquired of the *facchino* who took their bags in charge, what great arrival was expected, the man answered with an indifference worthy of democratic New York: "It is for the Silver Wedding of their Majesties, Signor; but there are so many Kings and Emperors and Princes in Rome now, we have ceased to take account of them."

"We have struck Rome at a crowded season," said Ralph, "and I don't know that you are going to like it overmuch. I say, Eve, if Somebody doesn't come for another week or so, what a heaven- 81
send you and your father will be to me for company!"

"That is the most cold-blooded way of making use of us to kill time with," said Eve; but she bestowed on him a well-pleased smile. To her, Ralph had been ever a chum,—a dear, good fellow, who was the best of company. His unexpected appearance here promised to add tenfold to her pleasure, while his hopes in the affair hinted at between them had been, for some time, familiar to her in detail.

"And all this while I have never told you," he went on, in his boyish manner, "that at Nice I fell in with that swell New York cousin of yours, Vance Townsend. Not half a bad chap, if he is rather close-mouthed. Shouldn't wonder if he's in Rome, now, like everybody else in this part of the world."

"Townsend?" said the Colonel, with animation. "Glad to hear there's a chance of seeing him. Just a year—isn't it, Eve?—since he visited us at the Hall. Well, there's no doubt we are in luck, if we meet Vance as well as you, Ralph." 82

"The funny part of it is," whispered the joyous Ralph to Evelyn, "some of the people we both knew in Nice put it into Townsend's head I was coming here to meet my *fiancée*. And you know, Eve, I am not engaged to her yet; her mother put us on probation for six months. The six months are out next week, though, and I don't think it would hurt Maud's mamma to hurry herself a little bit to get here, do you? How you will admire Maud's style, Evie! Her hair is dark as—" etc., etc., until Evelyn cut it short by jumping into the carriage drawn up in waiting for them.

Just now, she was not as well prepared to listen as usual. Certain feelings she had believed extinct proved themselves to have been merely dormant. Even the spectacle of Rome *en fête*, by night, its bands and fountains playing, its streets still filled with lively promenaders, did not wholly distract her from this sudden tumult of an emotion she was not prepared to define.

Constantly, during the crowded days that followed, while they drove hither and thither, attracted but provoked by the jumbling of ancient and modern in these haunts of history, she tried to 83
persuade herself she was not ever on the alert to see somebody who did not appear. For, from among the many acquaintances and a few friends encountered in the streets of the sociable little city, Vance was persistently missing.

Ralph, however, whose sweetheart also kept her distance, proved his philosophy by devoting his days to the Carlyles; and thus, under a sky blue as the fabled Elysian fields of Virgil, the festal week went on. Wherever their Majesties of Italy and Germany passed in public, they were greeted by thoroughfares black with people, windows and balconies blazing with flags and draperies, the clash of bands and the clank of soldiery.

The coachman engaged for the service of our friends would contrive, wherever bound, to take on the way some passing show of sovereigns; and, upon a certain fair day, for no reason avowed, he drove them into the tangle of vehicles and people always seen surrounding the doors of the Quirinal Palace whenever there was a chance to catch glimpses of royalties upon the move. There 84
ensconced, the saucy, bright-eyed fellow stood up, pretended his inability to get out of the snarl, gesticulated, talked to his friends and threatened his enemies in the crowd, while visibly rejoicing in the opportunity to see all likely to occur in that coveted quarter.

"Look here, cabby, if you don't move out of this to the Baths of Caracalla in just two minutes and a half," began Ralph, at last, in emphatic English; but he had no reason to go on, as the driver, seeing the young man's face, gathered up the reins, and extricated himself with much dexterity from the crowd.

Neither of his passengers noticed that a gentleman, in a carriage just then crossing theirs, looked at them, leaned forward, gave orders to his coachman, and at once proceeded to follow on their tracks.

In the glorious ruin of the greatest of temples to athletic exercise, Evelyn drew a deep breath of delight. Nothing in Rome, not even the Colosseum, had so impressed her with the grandeur of bygone achievement in architecture as this wondrous pile, with its vast spaces, the gray walls 85
breached by Time, out of which maidenhair grew and crows were flying—"crying to heaven for rain," as the guide poetically explained; the stately columns of red porphyry grouped around the beautiful mosaic floors; the lace-like traceries of carven stone; the niches and pedestals from which marvels of old sculpture had been removed; over all, the air that is gold and balm combined!

Evelyn leaned against a column abstractedly, while Ralph and her father walked about, discussing with their guide facts and statistics of the Thermae. They had indeed strolled quite out of her sight, when a shadow on the pavement beside her caused her to look up. If an answer to

thought be no surprise, then was not Evelyn surprised; for the person confronting her was Vance Townsend.

"I have known that you were in Rome ever since the night you arrived," he said, without preamble other than coldly offering her his hand. "I happened to be at the station to meet an English friend, when you came out; and I saw you get into your carriage and drive away." 86

"Then you can hardly claim to have earned a welcome from us, now," she began to say, lightly, but found it impossible to go on, checked by the look upon his face.

"I make no pretences," he said, bitterly. "If you care to know that I have either kept you in view every day since, or else have gone for long rides into the country, where I saw nobody, it is quite true. I have done everything foolish, everything foreign to my principles and habits, to satisfy, or to get away from, the feeling the sight of you aroused in me. I wonder what you'd think, if I told you I've been wandering about pretty much ever since I parted with you, a year ago, trying to get you out of my head. Many's the letter I've written to you and destroyed. Twice I set out to see you, and once I got back into the neighborhood of your home. When I saw you in the crowd at the station here, I actually thought I was possessed—" He checked himself. "I beg your pardon. I have no right to say these things to you, I know." 87

"You? You?" she could only repeat, bewildered by the meaning in his tone and the expression of his eyes. "Is it possible that you—"

"That I fell in love with you that time when you were holding me to account for a thousand transgressions, committed or not committed? Yes, it is quite possible. That need not prevent our remaining good friends, need it? I hope I've too much common sense to ask you to indulge in a discussion of these points, now; during the past week, I've been engaged continually, and I trust with some success, in disposing of the last remnant of hope I may have cherished that some day things might work around to give me at least a chance."

"You make me very unhappy," she exclaimed.

"That is far from my wish," he said, more gently. "Just at present you ought to be walking on roses. There! Your father and Corbin are coming back this way. I want to ask you to help me to excuse myself in your good father's sight, if I seem unsociable." 88

"One word," she said, the blood flaming into her cheeks. "It is due you to know that long ago, soon after you left us, I received a letter from Katherine Crawford,—a letter that made me understand many things I had judged harshly in your conduct."

"Mrs. Crawford has been always kind to me," he answered. "And no one rejoices more than I in her present happiness."

"Yes, she is happy,—perfectly so,—and her life is full of the duties that best suit her. She says it was all planned out for her by Providence, and kept in reserve until she was fit for it."

"So runs the world away!" he exclaimed, with a whimsical gesture.

After that, the others came, and there was much talk of the subjects naturally presenting themselves. When they moved out of the enclosure to go to the carriage, Vance walked with the Colonel, following Evelyn and Ralph. 89

"You will dine with us at our hotel this evening?" said the older man, at parting.

"I am sorry that I am engaged," Vance answered, with appropriate courtesy, "and that to-morrow I am off for Sicily. Sometime, later on in your wanderings, I shall hope to run upon you again. This is the worst of pleasant meetings in travel, is it not?"

When they were seated in the victoria, he shook Evelyn's hand last.

The day was finally at hand that was to bring Ralph's sweetheart—with her incidental father, mother, two younger sisters, and a governess—to the quarters engaged for them at Rome. In the young man's enthusiasm, he did not forget to wonder what cloud had passed over his Cousin Evelyn's enjoyment of the place, the sights, the season. He even consulted the Colonel as to whether Eve might not be unduly affected by the crowded condition of the town, and proposed for them to change to a quieter spot. And Eve's father, who had had his own anxieties on this point, prevailed upon her to give up the engagements she had made with apparent zest, and resort to Naples and Sorrento. 90

To Naples, accordingly, they went, the faithful Ralph accompanying them, at the cost of a night-journey on his return to Rome for the day that was to see his happiness in flower. He drove with them to their hotel, through the interminable streets, lined with palaces and thronged with paupers, and saw them ensconced in pleasant quarters facing Vesuvius, whose feather of smoke pointed to good weather. They dined together in a vast *salle-à-manger*, where, in a gallery, was conducted during their repast a noisy and mirth-provoking concert of fiddlers, mandolins, and guitars,—the performers singing, shouting, dancing, as they played. There was an hour before his train left, in which, while the Colonel smoked upon the balcony of their sitting-room, Eve walked out upon one of the quays with her cousin; and this hour Ralph determined to improve.

In the last day or two, trifles had shown this astute young man that the depression of his cousin

(for whom he cherished no grudge because, a year or two before, he had been wild to call her wife, and she would not hear of it) had been coincident with the meeting in Rome with Townsend. That very morning, he had found at his bankers', had read and put into his pocket, a letter written by Vance on arriving at Taormina, which had thrown upon the subject a new and surprising light. Just how to convey his discoveries to Evelyn, the most proud and sensitive of creatures about her sacred feelings, he had not yet decided. 91

They talked of the bay, of the mountains, of Vesuvius. Calmed and enchanted by the hour and scene, Eve wore her gentlest aspect, and Ralph felt emboldened to begin.

"This is as it should be," he said, with an air of generalizing. "You will go to Sorrento and Amalfi and Capri, and your roses will come back. I shall not forget you, Evie dear, because I am getting what I most want in life. You have always been to me a thing apart, and I've told Maud so, over and over again. By and by, I shall bring her to the Hall, and let her see you at your best, as its mistress. For you are not quite the same over here, Evie, as in Virginia air." 92

"Perhaps I am growing old," she said, smiling. "But never mind me. We shall miss you, Ralph, and it will require the greatest heroism to do without you. After this journey, nobody need tell me that 'three is trumpery.' We know better, do we not?"

"Why not send for your other cousin to take my place?" said Ralph, seeing his opportunity. "He is at Taormina, and would come, undoubtedly. I had a letter from him this morning, by the way. The most characteristic letter,—just like the man."

No answer. Ralph felt as he were treading a bridge of glass.

"To explain it, I should have to go back to the evening of that meeting in the Baths of Caracalla. He came to me at the hotel, and after a friendly chat, just as he was leaving, took occasion to say some uncommonly nice things about my relations with (as I thought) *Maud*; so I thanked him, and gushed a little about her, maybe,—in my circumstances, a fellow's excusable,—and off he went, I never suspecting that he all the time thought I was going to marry *you*." 93

Here Ralph was rewarded by a genuine start and a blush, but still Eve did not speak.

"A day later," Ralph went on, determined now to do or die, "something I recalled of our conversation made me realize the mistake he was under, and I wrote him a letter explaining it. Such a time as I had to find his whereabouts! His banker had no instructions to forward anything, and I won't tell you all the ups and downs of trying to get at him. Finally, in despair, I sent the letter, on the chance, to Taormina, and from there he answered me."

At this point, in revenge for her indifference, the diplomatist remained, in his turn, silent, until Eve, who could bear it no longer, turned upon him her beautiful young face, glowing in the evening light with an eager joy. "And—and?" she exclaimed, impetuously.

"He is a good sort—Townsend," went on Ralph, reflectively. "I've an idea, Evie, that if you and he could have managed to hit it off, you would have suited each other capitally. He would be the kind likely to settle down into a country gentleman, too; and you would never be happy in town. He has brains and a heart, in addition to his good looks and manners, and a restrained force of character that would be an excellent balance for this little impulsive lady, whose only fault is that she jumps at conclusions instead of working to them." 94

"You are perfectly right about that, Ralph," she said, laughing away a strong desire to cry. "I am learning wisdom, however, with rapidly advancing years. And you do only justice to my Cousin Vance, in your estimate of him. No doubt," here she swallowed a nervous catch in her voice, "if he told the truth in his letter, he congratulated you upon being allied to some one other than the young person who made his visit to Virginia last year a very hard test of patience, to say no more."

She stopped, and tried to turn away her head. But Ralph, looking her gently in the face, read there what gave him courage to launch the last arrow in his quiver. 95

"Whatever he said, I saw through it, Evie dear. And I—I could not wait to write an answer. I telegraphed my advice to come to Naples as fast as steam can carry him."

Shortly after her conversation upon the quay with Ralph (who, returning to Rome, had been duly translated into anticipated bliss), Eve and her father took advantage of a perfect Sunday for the excursion up Mount Vesuvius.

In a landau with two horses,—a third to be annexed on the ascent,—they traversed the long street formed by the villages of San Giovanni, La Barra, Portici, and Resina, stretching from the parent city—a street suggesting in the matter of population a series of scattered ant-hills. Such a merry, dirty, shameless horde of all ages, who, abandoning the dens they called homes, had issued forth under the sun blazing even at that early hour of morning in his vault of blue, to bivouac in the open highway, was never seen! Marketing, chaffering, vending, gossiping, cooking, eating, drinking, performing the rites of religion and of the toilet, the hum of their voices was like the note of some giant insect. It was when a stranger's carriage came in sight that the air became suddenly vocal with shrill cries for alms; vehicles and horses were surrounded, escorted by noisy beggars, whose half-naked children offered flowers, or turned somersaults perilously near the wheels. 96

Resina passed, they could breathe more freely. The street turmoil was succeeded by the peace of a country road mounting between lava walls, over which glimpses of sea, of deep-red clover in fields, of vineyard or lemon grove, were finally succeeded by glorious, unobstructed views of the mountains, bay, and city. In the region of recent overflows, they saw the most curious spectacle, to the newcomer, of fertile garden-strips of green, where clung tiny houses, pink or whitewashed, daring the mute monster overhead, while close beside them the mountain-side was streaked with ominous stains marking the spots where other homes had defied him just one day too long. 97

Higher still, in the track of the overflow of 1872, they experienced the striking effect of entering into a valley of desolation between walls of living green. Here, the lava in settling had wreathed itself into the forms of dragons couchant, of huge serpents, and other monstrous shapes that lay entwined as if asleep. Up above, arose the main cone of the crater, smooth as a heap of gun-powder, vast, majestic, cloud-circled; taking upon itself in the intense light a blooming purple tint; the smoke issuing from its summit now soon melting into space, now showing dense and threatening.

Evelyn, in whom the novelty as well as beauty of the scene had aroused fresh spirit, looked more like her old self than her fond father had seen her for many a long day. But it is fortunately not given to parents, however solicitous, to see all the workings of young minds; and the good gentleman would have been indeed surprised had he divined the mainspring of her animation. While he was indulging in a few mild objections to the length and slowness of the drive, the rapacity of wayside beggars, the heat of the sun, etc., such as naturally occur to the traveller unsupported by sentimental hopes, to our young lady the condition of motion was a necessity, and the act of getting upward a relief. 98

For the plain truth was that, since the last talk with Ralph, Evelyn had given rein to a thousand emotions repressed, during the months gone by, with stern self-chiding.

Until now, recalling the year before when Vance had left her to an unavailing sense of regret for her harsh judgment of him, she had hardly realized what their intercourse together had meant to her. But the period of his visit was, in fact, succeeded by one in which her salt of life had lost its savor; and Evelyn, to her dismay, found that her affections had gone from her keeping to this man's, acknowledged to have been the suitor of her friend.

That Katherine had refused Vance, and straightway married another lover, made very little difference to one of Eve's rigid creed in these matters. To her, love declared was love unchangeable; with air her heart she pitied Vance for his disappointment, and blamed herself for having repeatedly wounded him without reason. By means of this mode of argument, she had naturally succeeded in raising Townsend to the pedestal of a martyred hero, which, it may be conceived by those of colder judgment, did not lessen his importance in the girl's imagination. 99

As the months had gone on, and she had had nothing from him save packages of books and prints sent according to promise, as to a polite entertainer who is thus agreeably disposed of by the beneficiary of hospitality extended, her feelings had taken on the complexion of hopeless regret for an irrevocable past. What Eve had henceforth to do, according to her own strict ordinance, was to live down the impulse that made her give her heart unasked. The stress of these emotions had, in spite of her brave efforts, so worked upon her health that the Colonel, as fond of home as a limpet of his rock, determined to try for her the change of air and experience, resulting as we have seen. 100

And now, on this dazzling day, a "bridal of earth and sky" in one of the loveliest spots upon earth, she kept saying to herself, "By to-morrow—to-morrow, at latest—he will be with me! And then—and then—and *then*—!"

The carriage halted at a little wayside booth for the sale of wines and fruit. A dark-skinned woman, bearing a tray of glasses, with flasks of the delusive *Lachrymae Christi* (made from the grapes ripened upon these slopes) came forward to greet them. On Evelyn's side, a hawker, with shells and strings of coral, and coins alleged to have been found imbedded in the lava near at hand, importuned her. But, rejecting the others, she beckoned to a pretty, bare-legged boy carrying oranges garnished in their own glossy, dark-green leaves; and so busy was she in selecting the best of his refreshing fruit, she hardly observed that another claimant for her attention had appeared close beside the wheel. 101

"Please go away, my good man," she said at last, laughingly, without giving him a glance. "Indeed, I want nothing you can supply."

"That is a harsh assertion," Vance said, in a low tone meant for her ear, and then proceeded to greet both his cousins outspokenly.

He had reached Naples early that morning; had ascertained at their hotel that they were engaged to start for Vesuvius at a given hour; fearing collision with a party of strangers, had set out alone to walk up the mountain and take his chance of intercepting them; and had waited here for the purpose.

"After you had been journeying all night?" said the Colonel, with unfeigned surprise. "Why, my dear fellow, in your place I should have—"

Just then he intercepted, passing between Evelyn and Vance, a look that startled him. That his sentence remained unfinished nobody observed. The Colonel drew back into his corner, as if he

had been shot.

If she had divined her father's feeling, Eve could not have pitied any one who was gaining Vance. And Vance, at that moment, believed all the world to be as happy as himself! 102

To a love-affair so obvious, the ending naturally to be expected is of the old-fashioned and inevitable sort. In the beautiful Indian summer of the following autumn in Virginia, these two people were duly married at the Hall. From far and wide came relatives to wish them joy; it was like the gathering of a Scotch clan at the summons of the pipes. Prominent among the revellers at the dance following the nuptial ceremony was Cousin Josey, who, in a pair of antiquated leather pumps with buckles, led down the middle of a reel with his cherished "Lady-love." To please the old boy, Evelyn had worn the little string of pearls bought by him, years before, for a bride who was never to be. And so everybody was content, and one of the cousins said it was "exactly like a weddin' befo' the wah." 103

Out of Season

105

Chapter I

"No; no house-parties till the middle of July. Dear knows, what with a string of big dinners, my two little dances, and those tiresome Thursdays in January and February when everybody came, I have done all that could be expected by society from paupers like ourselves," said Mrs. Henry Gervase, settling herself in a wicker chair, on the veranda of her country home, and looking approvingly at her water-view.

"Paupers!" said a lady from a neighboring cottage, who had dropped in to call. Mrs. Gervase's friends rarely liked to commit themselves to positive comment upon her statements until certain which way the cat was meant to jump. Mrs. Luther Prettyman, the wife of the dry-goods magnate, whose good fortune it was to own the land adjoining the Gervase property at Sheepshead Point,—a recently famous resort for summer visitors on our far eastern coast,—now contented herself with a little deprecatory giggle that might mean anything, and waited for Mrs. Gervase to go on. 106

"Oh, well! everything is comparative; and on the scale by which people measure things in New York, to-day, we are simply grovelling in poverty. John,"—to her gardener,—"you have got that row of myosotis entirely out of line; and, remember, nothing but salvia behind the heliotropes. I like a blaze of scarlet and purple against a blue sea-line like this. Heavens! what a perfect afternoon! The atmosphere has been clarified, and those birches in the ravine 'twinkle with a million lights.' My dear woman, I make no apologies. Any one who wants me at this season of the year must take me as I am. After eight months of bricks and mortar, dirty streets, and stupid drives in the Park, I am fairly maudlin over Nature when I get her back in June.

"I went to a concert where Paderewski played a night or two before he left America; and I give you my word that while the music was going on I put up my fan and plainly heard the babble of this little brook of mine, and the lap of the waves over the rocks at high tide, with, now and then, the notes of the song-sparrow that comes back every year and perches on my Norway pine. Somebody said of me afterwards, at supper, that I had been having a little nap. They may say anything of me, I believe, and some idiot will be found to credit it. But please don't accept the newspaper report that I am to have Mr. and Mrs. This, or Mr. That and Mrs. T'other, stopping with me at Stoneacres during June. I am much too busy with my granger-work, and my husband too industrious doing nothing, to play host and hostess now." 107

"I did not know; I only thought—" ventured Mrs. Prettyman. "You see, everything is so dull here, socially, till August. And when one has a guest coming who is accustomed to a great deal of fashionable gaiety,—a young lady, a distinguished belle,—one naturally grasps at the idea of such pleasant house-parties as yours are known to be, dear Mrs. Gervase." 108

"We shall be dull as ditch-water," answered relentless Mrs. Gervase, turning around to survey the struggle of a fat-breasted robin to extract from the turf a worm that continued to emerge in apparently unending length. "And if you *will* have a girl out of season, why, put her on bread and milk and beauty-sleep, give her plenty of trashy novels and a horse to ride, and she'll do well enough."

"But—perhaps I am wrong—surely Mr. Gervase told Mr. Prettyman, when they were smoking on our veranda last Sunday, that you are expecting your nephew, Mr. Alan Grove."

"That's just like Mr. Gervase,—a perfect sieve for secrets," quoth Mrs. Gervase, contemptuously; "when I particularly requested him to mention Alan's visit to nobody. The poor boy is completely used up with work, and has engaged to get a paper ready to read before some scientific congress

next month, and finds himself unable to write a line of it in town. Here, I have promised him, he may have absolute quiet—not be called on to play civility or squire-of-dames for any one; and, I may as well warn you *now*, he's not to be expected to do a *hand's turn* of entertainment for your girl. Besides, I happen to know that he can't abide 'society' young women. He is plunged up to the neck in electricity, is poor, ambitious, clever, on the way to sure success; and I'm going to back him all I can, not put stumbling-blocks in his path." 109

"How plunged up to his neck in electricity?" asked puzzled Mrs. Prettyman.

"Electric law, my good soul; did you think it a new kind of capital punishment? The lucrative law of the future, I've heard wise men say. Simpkins!" hailing, with irresistible command, a butcher's cart that seemed possessed of a strong desire to drive away in a hurry from a side entrance to the house. "*Simpkins!* Oh! there you are; I meant to leave orders with the cook not to let you get away again to-day without a word from me. I noticed, on the book, that you had the effrontery to charge sixty cents a pound for spring chickens here in June. Now, don't tell me! The way all you natives do; you have a short season, and must make the most of it. This is not your season, or my season, either. Wait till August before you put on the screws. And your sweetbreads, eighty cents a pair, when *you know* that when Mr. Gervase and I first came here to live, you were *throwing sweetbreads away*, till we taught you the use of them! Now, mind, I shall get tired of sending friends to you to be fleeced in August, if this is what you do to me in June." 110

"I must be running off," said Mrs. Prettyman, arising from her spot of shade and luxurious comfort in the deep veranda filled, though not encumbered, with picturesque belongings, with stands and pots of blooming plants in every nook. "I'll declare, nobody's flowers do as well as yours. And the wages we pay our head gardener! It makes me really envious."

This, be it known, was a clever stroke on the part of neighbor Prettyman. Secretly resentful of the tepid interest in the personality of her expected guest,—who, in the eyes of the house of Prettyman, was an event,—she yet did not dare attempt to bring the greater lady to yield sympathy upon the spot. Mrs. Gervase's weakest side was for her flowers. She possessed the magic touch that alone nurtures them to perfection, and with it the proud love of a parent for children that grow inclined according to her will. 111

"Hum! We do pretty well, considering this house is built on the ragged edge of nothing over the sea, and is swept by all the winds of heaven, in turn, and sometimes all together. And, in a climate where one goes to bed in the Tropics and wakes up at the North Pole, what would you have? John, there, though I'll not set him up by telling him so, has learned all I know about flowers, and picks up new ideas every day. By August, now, these beds and stands will be worth looking at. What did you say is the name of the young person who's coming to stop with you? If you've nothing better, suppose you and she and Mr. Prettyman come over to dinner Saturday. Alan has promised me not to work at night, and by that time my plants will all be in the ground and my mind at rest."

"Thank you so much," said the lesser luminary. "It is always a treat to dine with you *en famille*; and it is—didn't I mention her?—Gladys Eliot who is coming to us to-morrow." 112

"Gladys Eliot! Why, she's gone with her people to London for two months. I saw her name in the *Teutonic's* list last Thursday. Those Eliots would never in the world let slip another chance for her to make the great match they've set out to get."

"Nevertheless," said Mrs. Prettyman, with some show of spirit, "Mrs. Eliot, who is my old school-friend, wrote me, the day before they sailed, that Gladys had taken it into her head to stay behind, and begged me to keep her till her aunt can come up from Baltimore in July and take the girl in charge."

"Three weeks of Gladys Eliot!" remarked Mrs. Gervase. "My poor woman, I pity you. By the end of the month there will be no health in you. A professional beauty, who has run the gauntlet of four or five years of incessant praises, has been advertised like 'Pear's Soap,' in England and America, and has failed to make her *coup*! I remember what Alan Grove said about her no longer ago than Christmas of last year: 'I haven't the advantage of Miss Eliot's acquaintance, but her and her kind I hold in abhorrence,—denationalized Americans; hangers-on of older civilizations that make a puppet-show of them; spoiled for home, with no rightful place abroad; restless, craving what no healthy-minded husband of their own kind can give them.' Bless me—and *those two* are going to *meet here*!" 113

"I think Mr. Alan Grove need not concern himself," said Mrs. Prettyman, driven to bay. "Mrs. Eliot mentioned in her letter that Gladys—it is no secret, evidently—is nearly, if not quite, engaged to marry some one the family feels is *in all respects* all they could have hoped for her."

"Then it must be either that Colonel Larkyns, the very rude man with large feet, who walked all over my velvet gown at the Egertons', last winter,—came over with Lord Glenmore, whom the Eliots tried for and couldn't get,—or else McLaughlin, the Irishman who made such a lot of money in Montana. The two men were running evenly, 'twas said. Let me think—didn't I see her at Claremont on McLaughlin's coach, last month? Pray, my dear, are we to congratulate you on having Mr. McLaughlin, also, as a member of your household, before long?" 114

"Oh dear, dear!" continued the plain-spoken lady to herself, when poor Mrs. Prettyman, fairly routed, had retired without honors from the field. "Why is nature so heavenly kind to us in American places of resort, and 'only man is vile'? Why does this struggle for place, this pride of

vogue, these types of our worst social element—I hate that word 'social,' it sounds vulgar; but what else expresses this for me?—follow one into this earthly Paradise? Here I have got myself into a pretty kettle of fish with Alan Grove. He will be bored to death and his visit broken up, for we can't rid ourselves of people who sit in our pocket, like the Prettymans in summer; and he will be running upon this Eliot creature perpetually. If Henry would help me, we might—but he is so abominably friendly and cordial with country neighbors, there's no hope from him. Besides, if a girl is pretty, it makes no earthly difference to my good man whether she is a fiend of calculation and cold-heartedness. I declare, I've no patience with Henry, anyhow." 115

So saying, Mrs. Gervase went out to drive with the offender in question, behind a pair of sleek cobs, in a little buckboard of tawny wood with russet leather cushions and harness,—his latest present,—and soon, in cheerful companionship, forgot all sorrows amid such views of land and water as Sheepshead Point people think only Sheepshead Point can offer. 116

Chapter II

To reach Sheepshead Point, a boat steams daily, and several times a day, from a station on the line of a great railway skirting the eastern Atlantic coast. Issuing from a drawing-room car there, a young woman, dressed in a tight-fitting skirt and jacket of sailor blue, with a loose shirt of red silk belted around a taper waist, her small head with its sailor-hat half shrouded from view in a blue tissue veil, walked lightly ahead of Mr. Alan Grove and, attended by an elderly maid, went far forward to stand in the bows of the boat.

Grove, struck by the grace and distinction of her carriage, looked again, and then was conscious of an actual fierce jump of the heart.

"Can there be two of them?" he asked of his inner man. "Doctors tell you if you keep your body in good order, and your mind healthily at work, you will never see a ghost—and yet—that's the double of the woman who sailed away from me last Thursday; who's haunted me during the six madly misspent weeks since I had the misfortune to be told off to take her in to dinner. Oh! no, it isn't. Yes, it is—by Jove, it *is* Gladys Eliot." 117

He was never so astonished. Believing her to be at that moment on the ocean, nearing British shores, Grove was fairly staggered when Miss Eliot, turning, espied him and, by a graciously easy nod, summoned him to her side. Considering the manner of their parting a few weeks back, he wondered at himself for the immediate abjectness of his obedience.

It was a favorite phrase of Gladys Eliot's admirers to describe her as having a "Duchess of Leinster head and throat." Nature had certainly bestowed upon this daughter of nobody in particular in the Western Hemisphere a pose of a proud little head upon broad, sloping shoulders, as fine as that much-photographed great lady's. She had, in addition, a pair of innocent, Irish-blue eyes and a guileless smile; a voice, in speaking, that was sweet and low; and the best or worst manners in the world, so critics said, according to the desirableness of her interlocutor. 118

"Mr. Grove! How perfectly extraordinary that you should be here," she exclaimed, giving him the tips of her well-gloved fingers, while the maid and dressing-bag withdrew discreetly into the background.

"Did you expect me to remain forever on the steps of the Claremont tea-house, like a monument of a city father, to adorn the suburbs of New York?"

"You are so quick-tempered, so unreasonable! How should I know you were going to take such dire offence? But please—I can't quarrel away off here, or even justify myself. If you are going to remain furious with me, at least gratify my curiosity first, and tell me how you came on this boat, and where you are going. Then, if you are so inclined, you may retire into your shell and sulk."

A soft light was shining in her eye. Her voice was pleading; her face, most beautiful. Grove, promising himself, in street vernacular, to "go off and kick himself" directly afterwards, took his place at her elbow and gazed down hungrily upon her artless, changeful countenance. 119

"Rather tell me why you are not about to plant your triumphant banner on British shores once more. I read your name in the list of those sailing. The newspapers have given all of your summer plans in detail, all the country-houses that are to receive you, all the aristocrats that are to send invitations to dinner, to meet your ship at Queenstown."

She colored slightly. "As usual, you are making fun of me. What would be the use, since you won't believe me, of telling you my actual reason for backing out of this English visit, and letting my mother and sister go without me? No, I shan't flatter you by showing my real self."

"I have seen enough of your real self, thank you. I believe I prefer the unreal, the imaginary woman I suffered myself to fancy you to be for a brief space after our acquaintance began."

"Now you are rude," she began, her voice faltering ever so little, but enough to shake his equilibrium. He made a movement towards her; and she looked him in the face, trying to keep down the tingle of satisfaction in her veins. For Gladys's experience of men had taught her to 120

recognize in a certain phase of incivility the existence of passion unsubdued. It is only indifference in his sex that can maintain an armor of polite self-control towards hers.

Grove caught the transient gleam in her eye, and read it aright. Immediately he was on the defensive, and his manner froze.

"I believe you know my aunt, Mrs. Gervase, in town," he said. "I think I saw you at one of her dances, in January."

"Mrs. Gervase is the dearest thing," interrupted Miss Eliot, conscious of blankness in her tone.

"She may be, but it would be a brave person who would tell her so. She is a delightful, but autocratic, personage; and one of the treats of the year for me is to get away to her and my uncle for a holiday, when they have no one else. This is one of those rare occasions. The cottage people who have come down to Sheepshead have a tacit agreement to keep to themselves, just now. 121
They are supposed to be getting their houses to rights, and making gardens, and what not. Mrs. Gervase says they are really wearing out the past season's gloves, and putting tonics on their hair, and trying new cures and doses, for which there was no time before leaving town. The days will pass in doing as we please, and in the evening we shall dine well (for the Gervases have a corker of a cook), after which my aunt and uncle and I will take each a book and a lamp into some nook of the library, and read till bedtime. You can't imagine a life more to my taste."

"Prohibitory to outsiders, at least," said Gladys. "This is, as I suppose you mean it to be, awfully alarming to me; for I haven't told you that I am for three weeks to be Mrs. Gervase's nearest neighbor. I am going to visit an old friend of my mother's,—Mrs. Luther Prettyman."

Grove experienced a sensation of dismay. The Prettymans! Château Calicot, as he had dubbed their new florid "villa," built on the shore in objectionable proximity to his uncle's house, some three years back! He remembered the vines planted, the shrubs set out, the rattan screens hung, 122
the final adjustment of chairs by Mrs. Gervase, in the attempt to shut out every glimpse of the Prettyman belongings from their place of daily rendezvous on the veranda at Stoneacres; his uncle's sly amusement when the cupola of the Prettyman stables, and the roof of a detestable little sugar-temple tea-house were projected on their line of vision, spite of all. Mrs. Gervase could not forgive herself for not having secured that point of land when land was so ridiculously cheap. On an average of once a day, she reminded her husband that she had begged him to do so, and he had put it off until too late.

Mrs. Prettyman, unvisited by Mrs. Gervase for many months after the red-brown gables of her costly dwelling rose into prominence at Sheepshead Point, had gradually found her way into quasi-intimacy at Stoneacres. Mrs. Gervase, protesting that her neighbor was commonplace, vacuous, a being from whom one could derive nothing more profitable than the address of a place in town to have one's lace lampshades made a dollar cheaper than elsewhere, allowed herself, in 123
time, to take a mild but perceptible interest in Prettyman affairs. Through force of habit, she had grown accustomed to survey the Prettyman lodge-gates, in driving, without remarking upon "the absurdity of gilded finials to iron railings, at a rough, seaside place like this." Nay, the noses of the Gervase cobs were now not infrequently turned in through these gilded railings. Mr. and Mrs. Gervase dined periodically with the Prettymans. The Prettymans repaired more frequently to Stoneacres. Mrs. Prettyman made capital, in town, of her friendship with "dear Mrs. Gervase." This, Grove, like the rest of the world, had come gradually to know and accept. But it grated on him to hear that the woman who, so far, had furnished his life its chief feminine influence should be associated in this way with the mistress of Château Calicot. It belittled his one passion—now put away as dead, but still his own. This, indeed, set the crowning touch upon his misfortune of meeting her again. 124

Chapter III

"My dear boy, you might have knocked me down with a feather," said Mrs. Gervase, upon capturing her nephew at the wharf and driving away with him. "Tell me at once what you mean by knowing Gladys Eliot, and arriving with her in that intimate sort of way, just as I had, with infinite trouble, succeeded in bluffing the Prettymans with a mere dinner on Saturday! Now you will be *having* to call. *You*, of all people, hitting it off with Gladys Eliot!"

"Give yourself no concern," put in Mr. Gervase, who was driving, looking back over his shoulder with a beaming smile; "I offer to throw myself into the breach. A woman as beautiful, as tall, as placid, as Miss Eliot commands the best homage of my heart. I forewarn you that I am going desperately into this affair. Such luck never came my way before." 125

"Stop at the confectioner's for the macaroons, Henry," said his wife, ignoring transports. "Alan, you are looking wretched. When I think of those ruddy, brown cheeks, and the look of vigor you brought out of your college athletics a few years back, I'm inclined to renounce mind and go in for muscle exclusively. Oh, that wretched grind of life in New York that crushes the youth and spirit out of you poor boys that have to toil for a living! Surely, it isn't *only* law that's worked such havoc in those pale, thin cheeks—"

"My dear Agatha, your sympathy would put a well man in his bed," said Mr. Gervase, whose keen

eyes took in more of the actual situation than did his wife's.

"Oh well!—stop here, please; no, I won't get down, Jonas sees me; he will be out directly, with the parcel—you must see, Henry, that Alan has changed, even since—"

"Alan, let me tell you of a bill our friend Jonas, here, who is a bit of a horse-jockey, as well as local confectioner and pastry-cook, sent in recently to your aunt. He had been selling her a mate to her 126
chestnut, and the account ran this way:

"'MRS. H. GERVASE TO I. JONAS, DR.

1 lb. lady-fingers	$ 0.30
One horse	250.00
½ lb. cream peppermints	0.20
Total,	$250.50'"

Grove was glad to cover his various discomforts with a laugh. But he did not find it easy to elude the vigilance of Mrs. Gervase, who bided her time until an opportunity presented itself for an uninterrupted talk with him.

"Stretch yourself out on that bamboo couch, and let me put the pillows in," she said, when they two adjourned to the veranda, in the twilight after dinner. "It is such fun to have a boy to cosset once more, with my own lads at college, and three weeks to wait before I can get Tom and Louis back from New London after the boat-race."

"You have such an inspired faculty for making men comfortable," Grove remarked, from the 127
depths of his *bien-être*.

"Custom, I suppose. An only daughter, with a father and three brothers to wait upon till I married, and a husband and two sons to impose on me since. I should not know how to handle girls. I like them, of course,—find them all very well in their way,—but they bother me. Perhaps it is that there are no old-fashioned girls any more—no young ones, certainly. They come into the world like Minerva from Jove's brain. They are so learned, or clever, or worldly-wise, read everything, see everything, hear everything discussed, have no illusions—but, there, I can't explain my preference. Men are captious, obstinate, whimsical, by turns; disappoint one continually in little things—but in the main they are so broad and big; scatter nonsense into thin air; are so loyal and unswerving to their beliefs; know where they stand, and, having made up their minds to action, do not change."

"In short," remarked Grove, "you are like the little servant-maid in Cranford, when they told her 128
to hand the potatoes to the ladies first. 'I'll do as you bid me, ma'am, but I like the lads best.' My dearest auntie, there must be guardian angels specially appointed to look after our sex, and you are one of them. This is the age and America is the field for the unchecked efflorescence of young womankind. But when the conversation takes on this complexion, I feel it to be unfair not to allow the defendant the assistance of counsel; though, even if Uncle Henry were here, I am sure we should both be demolished speedily."

"Never mind Henry," said that gentleman's representative. "He has got a new letter from a man in London whom he keeps for the purpose of making him miserable with catalogues of sales of books and papers he can't afford to buy. But he potters over them, and marks the lists, and writes back to the man in London, and, as you know, we do manage to become possessed of much more dear antiquity than the house will hold or our income warrant. This time, he is buried alive for an 129
hour to come, for it is about a sale of Sir Philip Francis's letters and manuscripts at Sotheby's very soon."

"I don't believe the real 'Junius' announcing himself would get me out of this bamboo chair and away from this deepening of eventide upon the sea and islands, the afterglow of sunset melting into moonlight, the soft caressing of the salt air blending with those hidden heliotropes of yours! Now, dear lady, let's go back to the concrete. I knew, the moment your eagle eye fell on me this afternoon, you would find out all that in me is. For so many years I've been telling you my scrapes, I may as well out with the latest and biggest of them. Two months ago, I took Gladys Eliot in to dinner at the Sargents'. I kept it from you in town, for which you'll say I am properly punished. I fell in love with her, like a schoolboy with green apples, heeding not the danger of unwholesomeness. After that, I met her when and wherever I could push my way to her. I thought of her, sleeping and waking; received from her looks and tones and words that would, as the lady 130
novelists are so fond of saying, 'tempt an anchorite;' *believed* in her!"

"My poor child, how wretched!" said Mrs. Gervase, promptly.

"So it proved. Last but not least of the comedy,—I skip the details,—I was deluded into buttoning myself up in a fluffy, long-tailed, iron-gray coat that I got in London last spring and had not had time to wear, put on a bunch of white carnations, and drove out to one of those inane Claremont teas in my friend Pierre Sargent's trap, because, forsooth, *she* asked me. For an hour I suffered martyrdom in that little greenhouse sort of a veranda, with people herded together gossiping, and not setting their feet upon the lawn over the river that they came out to see. Women talked drivel to me, waiters slopped tea over me, and we walked on slices of buttered bread. Then *she* came—on the box-seat of that brute McLaughlin's drag, having eyes for him only, so that every

one talked of it!"

"I remember—and I could not imagine what brought you there. Yes, I sat down on a little cake and completely ruined my new porcelain-blue *crépon*—those waiters were very careless. Jolly 131
faded it trying to take out the spot, and Mathilde had the greatest trouble to match the stuff. Alan, that man McLaughlin ought to be drummed out of polite society. The girl who would receive his attentions, let herself be talked of as likely to be his wife, cannot at heart be nice. When your dear mother and I were girls, we would not have *looked* at a big, vulgar creature like that, simply because he drove four-in-hand and was known to be rich. He would never have been asked to your grandfather's table. The materialism of this age takes, to me, no form more objectionable than the frank acceptance of such as he by women, old and young."

"Exactly," said Grove, grimly. "And when I met her at his side, she turned away from him one moment with a banal jest for me, and then quickly recaptured him, as if fearful he would escape. That, even my infatuation would not suffer. I turned on my heel, and, until I met her by chance on the boat to-day, have never seen her since." 132

"What can have been her reason for not going abroad?" said Mrs. Gervase, eagerly—a trifle suspiciously.

Grove was silent. In his ear sounded a dulcet voice, murmuring as the boat neared shore: "Perhaps, when you have consented to feel better friends with me, you will come and let me tell you *why I stayed*."

"You know, of course, that everybody says she is engaged? Her mother has hinted it to Mrs. Prettyman. If it be to this McLaughlin, then God knows you are well rid of her. If that be a blind, Alan dear,—you know it was always my way with you boys to scold about little things and let great ones pass,—I shan't add a word to your self-reproach; but I'll warn you—oh! I won't have the sin on my soul of letting you go unwarned. That woman, no matter whether she thinks she loves you or not, would make your misery. The parents of to-day don't trouble themselves to train up wives for the rank and file of our honest gentlemen. They create fine ladies, and look about for some one to take the expense of them off their hands. It is common talk that the Eliots have been 133
strained to their utmost means to carry their girls from place to place, with the expectation of making rich marriages. The beauty and success of this one has apparently blinded those poor people to the consequences of their folly. The girl has been brought up to fancy herself of superior clay,—her habits are luxurious, her wants extravagant.

"More than all, for five years she has been fed on the flatteries of society. Personal praise is indispensable to her. She has lived and consorted with the most lavish entertainers of the most reckless society in our republic. Even supposing that you won her beauty and graces for your own, what on earth could you expect to offer her in exchange for what she would give up? My poor, dear lad, I'm talking platitudes, you think; but you and Tom and Louis shall not be allowed to wreck your futures upon such as Gladys Eliot, while I have breath to speak. I'm afraid I think all marriages a mistake for young men. I know they are, as we measure and value things, in what we call 'fashionable life.' Go out of it, by all means, if you can. To take *her* out of it you would find 134
to be quite another matter. And now, after this long homily, I've one question to put. Answer it, if you like—if you think I've the right to ask it. After seeing her again to-day, do you feel there is danger in her proximity?"

"You have certainly torn sentiment to shreds," said Alan, getting up from amid his cushions and beginning to stride up and down the long veranda. Mrs. Gervase watched him without further speech. That he did not again allude to the subject sent her to bed with keen anxiety and a renewed regret that Mr. Gervase had not taken her advice about buying that point of land before it fell into the hands of the Prettymans.

For the two or three days following his arrival at Stoneacres, Grove made no attempt to see his neighbor's guest. Once, indeed, they encountered her on horseback, while driving together in a family party in the buckboard, behind the cobs. Mr. Gervase, who, in his later enthusiasm about the Junius correspondence, had forgotten his charmer, asked who was that stunning, pretty girl, 135
and, on being rallied by his wife, declared his poor sight was at fault, and that he meant to call on the Prettymans that very day; but Saturday brought with it the appointed dinner, without other overture from Stoneacres than cards left by Mrs. Gervase when the ladies were from home.

Grove was hardly surprised when, on descending to the drawing-room in evening clothes, he found only that very colorless pair of Prettymans. Miss Eliot, it was alleged, was suffering from too long a ride in the hot sun of the afternoon to make the effort to come out. He saw in the countenance of his aunt a look of relief, which she at once proceeded to mask by unusual suavity to mankind in general, her flattered guests in particular.

"The worst is over; I am safe," Grove decided. "But I like her all the better for that womanly holding back. Now, to live down my folly as best I can."

He threw himself into hard work, and the days passed healthily. Mrs. Gervase had begun to relax her vigilance, to breathe almost free of care, when, upon one of his morning rides, ahead of him 136
in a forest glade, he espied Gladys Eliot, in the saddle, attended by one of the Prettyman boys, a youngster of thirteen, mounted on a polo pony in process of "showing off" his and his master's accomplishments.

At the sound behind them, both Gladys and the boy turned to look; and Grove saw that he could

not retreat without a decided lack of dignity. He therefore rode by them, receiving from Miss Eliot a faint and chilly nod; from the boy,—an acquaintance of last year,—a more cordial salutation.

"I say, Mr. Grove, *can't* Punch take that fallen tree?" cried out the lad, in shrill treble. "*She* says it's dangerous, because the bank is caved. Hold on one minute, and I'll show you he can clear it, bank and all."

Punch, proving nothing loth, jumped the obstacles in question gallantly, but on the far side slipped on something, and spilled his rider among a bed of tall bracken, in which the boy lay, lost to sight. Both Grove and Gladys were in a minute at his side, shocked at finding him white and 137
senseless.

"It was not the fall," she said, rapidly. "He has heart-trouble, and his mother is always anxious about a sudden shock for him. He will outgrow it probably, the doctors say. Here, you hold him in your arms, while I get water from that brook. I know what to do, and he will soon come to himself."

Grove found himself silently obeying her behests. He was struck by her prompt presence of mind, her deftness, and good sense. "What an admirable trained nurse is lost to the world in her!" he thought, and, when all was done, and the boy gave token of returning life, sat still, content to crush down moss and ferns, awkwardly holding his burden, while Gladys knelt so close that her breath in speaking fanned his cheek.

"It wasn't Punch's fault. I've got a big bee buzzing in my head," were the welcome words they at last heard from the sufferer.

"Yes, I know, Jim dear, but don't talk now till the big bee flies away," and the boy, closing his 138
eyes, appeared to sleep.

"Lay his head on my lap, and then, if you don't mind riding back and ordering some sort of a trap, without letting his mother know—"

"I can't leave you here. It is too far from home, and the country hereabouts is quite bare of dwellings. Nor would I like you to ride so far alone. There; let him sleep, and we will watch him till he wakes. No doctor could have treated him more cleverly than you."

"It's the result of a 'First Aid to the Injured' class I went to once, perhaps. But I always had a knack with ill people," she said, dropping the deep fringes of her eyes upon damask cheeks.

That evening, Grove could do no less than call to inquire after Master Jim, who, not much the worse for his attack, kept his adoring mother in durance at his bedside, while Grove sat watching the opal flushes die out of a western sky, in company with Gladys. Quite another Gladys was this, 139
in all save beauty and her dulcet voice, from his enslaver of town life.

And now, to Mrs. Gervase's ill-concealed dismay, visits, meetings, rides, boating, began and continued daily. Grove was teaching Miss Eliot chess, he said, and the other things were what they call upon the stage "incidental divertisements."

A fortnight of glorious weather had passed thus, when, on the eve of Grove's return to town and work, he asked Gladys to go out in a boat with him to watch the sunset on the water.

"Now you have told me there is no reason I may not speak, I can wait no longer for an answer," he said, as, resting on his oars, he scanned her face eagerly. "When a man tears his heart out and throws it at a woman's feet, surely he offers something. But that, you know, is my all. If you can consent to share the kind of life mine has got to be for the next five or six years, I think I see daylight beyond. By that time, your first youth will be gone, you will be forgotten by the people 140
who court you now, you will be a nobody in their esteem. To me, you will always be the one woman of the world. You will have the full love of my heart; and you shall see what that means, when a true man pours it upon you unrestrained. I don't pretend to be worth it, Heaven knows. But I do say you have never before been loved by a man like me, and you know it and feel it thoroughly. It's for you to take or leave me, accepting consequences."

"What a stand-and-deliver kind of love-making," Gladys tried to say; but she was deeply stirred. Remaining silent, her eyes filled with tears; her head drooped towards her breast.

"Gladys!" cried he, exultingly.

"Don't you see, now, the real reason why I could not go abroad?" she said, smiling on him brightly, and lifting, at the same moment, her ungloved left hand to put back a loose lock of hair that the wind had blown across her cheek. Grove, gazing at her with his whole soul in his eyes, became aware of a ring upon the fourth finger,—a ring of such conspicuous brilliancy and choice 141
gems as to convey but one meaning,—and his expression changed.

"Oh! I hate it! I shall give it back!" she exclaimed, a burning blush settling upon her face. "I did not mean—it was an accident. I hate it, I tell you! Why do you look at me like that?"

She tore the ring from her hand, and impetuously put it out of sight. Presently, as Grove, in mechanical fashion, resumed his rowing without a word, she cried out, passionately:

"Why do you not ask me to explain all the—circumstances of my life since I saw you last? Why

can't you understand that a girl situated as I am has temptations that at times seem to her irresistible? Need I mortify myself by telling you that I am *driven*—driven till I feel as if I would do anything to get rest from eternal lectures about what a rich marriage has got to do for me—and for others? Yes, you are right in saying that a man like you never before asked me to marry him. Because I feel that—because—because—Oh! you are cruel not to speak—to help me! How can I put into words that I am willing to give up all—" 142

It was impossible, facing the rigid coldness of his face, to go on. She sat in wretched silence till they reached shore, and he gave her his chilly hand to help her upon the float. Then the touch of her fingers sent a tremor of relenting into his veins.

"Oh, if I could! If I could! But he too—that other one—believed. Tell me; he does not still believe in you?"

"I hate him," she said, doggedly. She shivered a little, as the quickened breeze of evening struck her thinly-clad form.

Grove, clasping her hand, gazed into her eyes with a desperate resolve to read her heart.

"Let me go—it is no use," she said, turning away from him.

And, with a sigh deep as Fate, he loosened his hold of her—forever. 143

On Frenchman's Bay

145

Chapter I

From Maxwell Pollock, Esq., No. — Fifth Avenue, New York, to Stephen Cranbrooke, Esq., —— Club, New York.

"May 30, 189-.

"My dear Cranbrooke:

"You will wonder why I follow up our conversation of last evening with a letter; why, instead of speaking, I should write what is left to be said between us two.

"But after a sleepless night, of which my little wife suspects nothing, I am impelled to confide in you—my oldest friend, *her* friend, although you and she have not yet grown to the comprehension of each other I hoped for when she married me three years ago—a secret that has begun to weigh heavy upon my soul.

"I do not need to remind you that, since our college days, you have known me subject to fits of moodiness and depression upon which you have often rallied me. How many times you have said that a fellow to whom Fate had given health, strength, opportunity, and fortune—and recently the treasure of a lovely and loving wife—has no business to admit the word 'depression' into his vocabulary! 146

"This is true. I acknowledge it, as I have a thousand times before. I am a fool, a coward, to shrink from what is before me. But I was still more of a fool and a coward when I married her. For her sake, the prospect of my death before this summer wanes impels me to own to you my certainty that my end is close at hand.

"In every generation of our family since the old fellow who came over from England and founded us on Massachusetts soil, the oldest son has been snatched out of life upon the threshold of his thirtieth year. I carried into college with me an indelible impression of the sudden and distressing death of my father, at that period of his prosperous career, and of the wild cry of my widowed mother when she clasped me to her breast, and prayed Heaven might avert the doom from me. 147

"Everything that philosophy, science, common sense, could bring to the task of arguing me out of a belief in the transmission of this sentence of a higher power to me, has been tried. I have studied, travelled, lived, enjoyed myself in a rational way; have loved and won the one woman upon earth for me, have revelled in her wifely tenderness.

"I have tried to do my duty as a man and a citizen. In all other respects, I believe myself to be entirely rational, cool-headed, unemotional; but I have never been able to down that spectre. He is present at every feast; and, although in perfectly good health, I resolved yesterday to put the question to a practical test. I called at the office of an eminent specialist, whom I had never met, although doubtless he knew my name, as I knew his.

"Joining the throng of waiting folk in Dr. ——'s outer office, I turned over the leaves of the last number of *Punch*, with what grim enjoyment of its *menu* of jocularity you may

conceive. When my turn came, I asked for a complete physical examination. But the doctor got no farther than my heart before I was conscious of awakening interest on his part. When the whole business was over, he told me frankly that in what he was pleased to call 'a magnificent physique,' there was but one blemish,—a spot upon the ripe side of a peach,—a certain condition of the heart that 'might or might not' give serious trouble in the future. 148

"'Might or might not'! How I envied the smooth-spoken man of science his ability to say these words so glibly! While I took his medical advice,—that, between us, was not worth a straw, and he knew it, and I knew it,—I was thinking of Ethel. I saw her face when she should know the worst; and I became, immediately, an abject, cringing, timorous thing, that crept out of the doctor's office into the spring sunshine, wondering why the world was all a-cold.

"Here's where the lash hits me: I should never have married Ethel; I should, knowing my doom, have married no one but some commonplace, platitudinous creature, whom the fortune I shall leave behind me would have consoled. But Ethel! high-strung, ardent, simple-hearted, worshipping me far beyond my deserts! Why did I condemn her, poor girl, to what is so soon to come? 149

"On the fifteenth day of the coming August, I shall have reached thirty years. Before that day, the blow will fall upon her, and it is my fault. You know, Cranbrooke, that I do not fear death. What manly soul fears death? It is only to the very young, or to the very weak of spirit, the King appears in all his terrors. Having expected him so long and so confidently, I hope I may meet him with a courageous front. But Ethel! Ethel!

"She will be quite alone with me this summer. Her mother and sisters have just sailed for the other side, and I confess I am selfish enough to crave her to myself in the last hours. But some one she must have to look after her, and whom can I trust like you? I want you to promise to come to us to spend your August holiday; to be there, in fact, when—

"In the meantime, there must be no suggestion of what I expect. She, least of all, must suspect it. I should like to go out to the unknown with her light-hearted, girlish laugh ringing in my ears. 150

"When we meet, as usual, you will oblige me by saying nothing of this letter or its contents. By complying with this request, you will add one more—a final one, dear old man—to the long list of kindnesses for which I am your debtor; and, believe me, dear Cranbrooke,

"Yours, always faithfully,

"MAXWELL POLLOCK."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Stephen Cranbrooke, dropping the sheet as if it burnt him, and sitting upright and aghast. "So *this* is the cranny in Pollock's brain where I have never before been able to penetrate."

Later that day, Mr. Cranbrooke received another epistle, prefaced by the house address of the Maxwell Pollocks.

"Dear Mr. Cranbrooke," this letter ran, "Max tells me he has extended to you an invitation to share our solitude *à deux* in your August holiday. I need hardly say that I endorse this heartily; and I hope you will not regret to learn that, instead of going, as usual, to our great, big, isolated country-place in New Hampshire, I have persuaded Max to take a cottage on the shore of Frenchman's Bay, near Bar Harbor,—but not too near that gay resort,—where he can have his sailboat and canoe, and a steam-launch for me to get about in. They say the sunsets over the water there are adorable, and Max has an artist's soul, as you know, and will delight in the picturesque beauty of it all. 151

"I want to tell you, confidentially, that I have fancied a change of air and scene might do him good this year. He is certainly not ill; but is, as certainly, not quite himself. I suppose you will think I am a little goose for saying so; but I believe if anything went wrong with Max, I could never stand up against it. And there is no other man in the world, than you, whom I would ask to help me to find out what it really is that worries him,—whether ill-fortune, or what,—certainly not ill-health, for he is a model of splendid vigor, as everybody knows, my beautiful husband!" 152

"This is what she calls pleasant reading for me," said plain, spare Stephen Cranbrooke, with a whimsical twist of his expressive mouth.

"At any rate," he read, resuming, "you and I will devote ourselves to making it nice for him up there. No man, however he loves his wife, can afford to do altogether without men's society; and it is so hard for me to get Max to go into general company, or to cultivate intimacy with any man but you!

"There is a bachelor's wing to the cottage we have taken, with a path leading direct to the wharf where the boats are moored; and this you can occupy by yourself, having breakfast alone, as Max and I are erratic in that respect. We shall have a buckboard for the ponies, and our saddle-horses, with a horse for you to ride; and we shall pledge each other not to accept a single invitation to anybody's house, unless it please us to go there.

"Not less than a month will we take from you, and I wish it might be longer. Perhaps you 153

may like to know there is no other man Max would ask, and I should want, to be 'one of us' under such circumstances.

"Always cordially yours,

"ETHEL POLLOCK."

"I asked her for bread, and she gave me a stone," he quoted, with a return of the whimsical expression. "Well! neither he nor she has ever suspected my infatuation. I am glad she wrote as she did, though, for it makes the watch I mean to set over Max easier. After looking at his case in every aspect, I am convinced there is a remedy, if I can only find it."

A knock, just then, at the door of Mr. Cranbrooke's comfortable bachelor sitting-room was followed by the appearance inside of it of a man, at sight of whom Cranbrooke's careworn and puzzled countenance brightened perceptibly.

"Ha! Shepard!" he said, rising to bestow on the newcomer a hearty grip of the hand. "Did you divine how much I wanted to talk to a fellow who has pursued exactly your line of study, and one, too, who, more than any other I happen to be acquainted with, knows just how far mind may be made to influence matter in preventing catastrophe, when—but, there, what am I to do? It's another man's affair,—a confidence that must be held inviolable." 154

"Give me the case hypothetically," said Shepard, dropping, according to custom, into a leathern chair out at elbows but full of comfort to the spine of reclining man, while accepting one of Cranbrooke's galaxy of famously tinted pipes.

"I think I will try to do so," rejoined his friend, "since upon it hangs the weal or woe of two people, in their way more interesting to me than any others in the world."

"I am all ears," said Dr. Shepard, fixing upon Cranbrooke the full gaze of a pair of deep-set orbs that had done their full share of looking intelligently into the mystery of cerebral vagaries. Cranbrooke, as well as he could, told the gist of Pollock's letter, expressing his opinion that to a man of the writer's temperament the conviction of approaching death was as good as an actual death-warrant. 155

Shepard, who asked nothing better than an intelligent listener when launched upon his favorite theories, kept the floor for fifteen minutes in a brilliant offhand discourse full of technicalities intermingled with sallies of strong original thought, to which Cranbrooke listened, as men in such a case are wont to do, in fascinated silence.

"But this is generalizing," the doctor interrupted himself at last. "What you want is a special discussion of your friend's condition. Of course, not knowing his physical state, I can't pretend to say how long it is likely to be before that heart-trouble will pull him up short. But the merest tyro knows that men under sentence from heart-disease have lived their full span. It is the obsession of his mind, the invasion of his nerves by that long-brooding idea, that bothers me. I am inclined to think the odds are he will go mad if he doesn't die."

"Good God, Shepard!" came from his friend's pale lips. 156

"Isn't that what *you* were worrying about when I came in? Yes—you needn't answer. You think so, too; and we are not posing as wise men when we arrive at that simple conclusion."

"What on earth are we to do for him?"

"I don't know, unless it be to distract his mind by some utterly unlooked-for concatenation of circumstances. Get his wife to make love to another man, for instance."

"Shepard, you forget; these are my nearest friends."

"And you forget I am a sceptic about a love between the sexes that cannot be alienated," answered the little doctor, coolly.

Cranbrooke had indeed, for a moment, lost sight of his confidant's dark page of life—forgotten the experience that, years ago, had broken up the doctor's home, and made of him a scoffer against the faith of woman. He was silent, and Shepard went on with no evidence of emotion.

"When that happened to *me*, it was a dynamite explosion that effectually broke up the previous courses of thought within me; and, naturally, the idea occurs to me as a specific for the case of your melancholy friend. Seriously, Cranbrooke, you could do worse than attack him from some unexpected quarter, in some point where he is acutely sensitive—play upon him, excite him, distract him, and so carry him past the date he fears." 157

"How could I?" asked Cranbrooke of himself.

There was another knock; and, upon Cranbrooke's hearty bidding to come in, there entered no less a person than the subject of their conversation.

Even the astute Shepard finished his pipe and took his leave without suspecting that the manly, healthy, clear-eyed, and animated Maxwell Pollock had anything in common with the possessed hero of Cranbrooke's story. Cranbrooke, who had dreaded a reopening of the subject of Pollock's letter, was infinitely relieved to find it left untouched.

The visit, lasting till past midnight, was one of a long series dating back to the time when they

were undergraduates at the university. There had never been a break in their friendship. The society of Cranbrooke, after that of his own wife, was to Pollock ever the most refreshing, the most inspiring to high and manly thought. They talked, now, upon topics grave and gay, without hinting at the shadow overlying all. Pollock was at his best; and his friend's heart went out to him anew in a wave of that sturdy affection "passing the love of woman"—rare, perhaps, in our material money-getting community, but, happily, still existing among true men. 158

When the visitor arose to take leave, he said in simple fashion: "Then I may count on you, Cranbrooke, to stand by us this summer?"

"Count on me in all things," Cranbrooke answered; and the two shook hands, and Pollock went his way cheerily, as usual.

"Is this a dream?" Cranbrooke asked himself, when left alone. "Can it be possible that sane, splendid fellow is a victim of pitiful hallucination, or that he is really to be cut off in the golden summer of his days. No, it can't be; it must not be. He must be, as Shepard says, 'pulled up short' by main force. At any cost, I must save him. But how? *Anyhow!* Max must be made to forget himself—even if I am the sacrifice! By George! this *is* a plight I'm in! And Ethel, who adores the ground he walks upon! I shall probably end by losing both of them, worse luck!" 159

The morning had struggled through Cranbrooke's window-blinds before he stirred from his fit of musing and went into his bedroom for a few hours of troubled sleep. 160

Chapter II

Mr. and Mrs. Pollock took possession of their summer abiding-place on a glorious day of refulgent June, such as, in the dazzling atmosphere of Mount Desert Island, makes every more southerly resort on our Atlantic coast seem dull by comparison. To greet them, they found a world of fresh-washed young birches sparkling in the sun; of spice-distilling evergreens, cropping up between gray rocks; of staring white marguerites, and huge, yellow, satin buttercups, ablow in all the clearings; of crisp, young ferns and blue iris, unfolding amid the greenery of the wilder bits of island; haunts that were soon, in turn, to be blushing pink with a miracle of brier-roses.

And what a charmed existence followed! In the morning, they awoke to see the water, beneath their windows, sparkle red in the track of the rising sun; the islets blue-black in the intense glow. All day they lived abroad in the virgin woods, or on the bay in their canoe. And, after sunsets of radiant beauty, they would fall asleep, lulled by the lapping of little waves upon the rock girdle that bound their lawn. It was all lovely, invigorating, healthful. Of the cottagers who composed the summer settlement, only those had arrived there who, like the Pollocks, wanted chiefly to be to themselves. 161

In these early days of the season, Max and Ethel liked to explore on horseback the bosky roads that thread the island, startling the mother partridge, crested and crafty, from her nest, or sending her, in affected woe, in a direction to lead one away from where her brood was left; lending themselves to the pretty comedy with smiles of sympathy. Or else, they would rifle the ferny combs of dew-laden blossoms, all the while hearkening to the spring chatter of birds that did their best to give utterance to what wind-voice and leaf-tone failed to convey to human comprehension. Then, emerging from green arcades, our equestrians would find themselves, now, in some rocky haunt of primeval solitude facing lonely hilltops and isolated tarns; now, gazing upon a stretch of laughing sea framed by a cleft in the highlands. 162

Another day, they would climb on foot to some higher mountain top, and there, whipped by tonic breezes, stand looking down upon the wooded waves of lesser summits, inland; and, seaward, to the broad Atlantic, with the ships; and, along the coast, to the hundreds of fiords, with their burden of swirling waters!

Coming home from these morning expeditions with spirit refreshed and appetite sharpened, it was their custom to repair, after luncheon, to the water, and by the aid of sails, steam, or their own oars or paddles, cut the sapphire bay with tracks of argent brightness, or linger for many a happy hour in the green shadow of the sylvan shore.

The month of July was upon the wane before husband and wife seemingly aroused to the recollection that their idyl was about to be interrupted by the invasion of a third person. Ethel, indeed, had pondered regretfully upon the coming of Cranbrooke for some days before she spoke of it to her husband; while Max!— 163

The real purpose of Cranbrooke's visit, dismissed from Pollock's mind with extraordinary success during the earlier weeks of their stay upon the island, had by now assumed, in spite of him, the suggestion of a death-watch set upon a prisoner. He strove not to think of it. He refrained from speaking of it. So delicious had been to him the draft of Ethel's society, uninterrupted by outsiders, in this Eden of the eastern sea; so perfect their harmony of thought and speech; so charming her beauty, heightened by salt air and outdoor exercise and early hours, Max wondered if the experience had been sent to him as an especial allowance of mercy to the condemned. To the very day of Cranbrooke's arrival, even after a trap had been sent to the evening boat to fetch him, the husband and wife refrained from discussing the expected event.

It was the hour before sunset, following a showery afternoon; and, standing together upon their lawn to look at the western sky, Max proposed to her to go out with him for awhile in the canoe. 164
They ran like children, hand in hand, to the wharf, where, lifting the frail birch-bark craft from its nest, he set it lightly afloat. Ethel, stepping expertly into her place, was followed by Max, who, in his loose cheviot shirt, barearmed and bareheaded, flashing his red-dyed paddle in the clear water, seemed to her the embodiment of manly grace and strength.

They steered out into the bay; and, as they paused to look back upon the shore, the glory of the scene grew to be unspeakable. Behind the village, over which the electric globes had not yet begun to gleam, towered Newport, a rampart of glowing bronze, arched by a rainbow printed upon a brooding cloud. Elsewhere, the multicolored sky flamed with changing hues, reflected in a sea of glass. And out of this sea arose wooded islands; and, far on the opposite shore of the mainland, the triple hills had put on a vestment of deepest royal purple.

"I like to look away from the splendor, to the side that is in shadow," said Ethel. "See, along that eastern coast, how the reflected sunlight is flashed from the windows on that height, and the blue 165
columns of hearth smoke arise from the chimneys! Doesn't it make you somehow rejoice that, when the color fades, as it soon must, we shall still have our home and the lights we make for ourselves to go back to?"

There was a long silence.

"What has set you to moralizing, dear?" he asked, trying to conceal that he had winced at her innocent question.

"Oh! nothing. Only, when one is supremely happy, as I am now, one is afraid to believe it will endure. How mild the air is to-night! Look over yonder, Max; the jewelled necklace of Sorrento's lights has begun to palpitate. Let us paddle around that fishing-schooner before we turn."

"Ethel, you are crying."

"Am I? Then it is for pure delight. I think, Max, we had never so fine an inspiration as that of coming to Mount Desert. My idea of the place has always been of a lot of rantipole gaieties, and people crowded in hotels. While this—it is a little like Norway, and a great deal like Southern 166
Italy. Besides, when before have we been so completely to ourselves as in that gray stone lodge by the waterside, with its hood of green ivy, and the green hill rising behind it? Let us come every year; better still, let us build ourselves a summer home upon these shores."

"Should you like me to buy the cottage we now have, so that you can keep it to come to when you like?"

"When *you* like, you mean. Max, it can't be you have caught cold in this soft air, but your voice sounds a little hoarse. Well! I suppose we must go in, for Mr. Cranbrooke will be arriving very soon."

Ethel's sigh found an echo in one from her husband, at which the April-natured young woman laughed.

"There, it's out! We don't want even Cranbrooke, do we? To think the poor, dear man's coming should have been oppressing both of us, and neither would be first to acknowledge it! After all, Max darling, it is your fault. It was you who proposed Cranbrooke. I knew, all along, that I'd be better satisfied with you alone. Now, we must just take the consequence of your overhasty 167
hospitality, and make him as happy as we are—if we can."

"If we can!" said Max; and she saw an almost pathetic expression drift across his face—an expression that bewildered her.

"Why do you look so rueful over him?"

"I am thinking, perhaps, how hard it will be for him to look at happiness through another man's eyes."

"Nonsense! Mr. Cranbrooke is quite satisfied with his own lot. He is one of those self-contained men who could never really love, I think," said Mrs. Pollock, conclusively.

"He has in some way failed to show you his best side. He has the biggest, tenderest heart! I wish there was a woman fit for him, somewhere. But Stephen will never marry, now, I fear. She who gets him will be lucky—he is a very tower of strength to those who lean on him."

"As far as strength goes, Max, you could pick him up with your right hand. It may be silly, but I do love your size and vigor; when I see you in a crowd of average men, I exult in you. Imagine any 168
woman who could get *you* wanting a thin, sallow person like Cranbrooke!"

"He can be fascinating, when he chooses," said Max.

"The best thing about Cranbrooke, Max, is that he loves you," answered his wife, wilfully.

"Then I want you, henceforth, to try to like him better, dear; to like him for himself. He is coming in answer to my urgent request; and I feel certain the more you know of him, the more you will trust in him. At any rate, give him as much of your dear self as I can spare, and you will be sure of pleasing me."

"Max, now I believe it is you who are crying because you are too happy. I never heard such a solemn cadence in your voice. I don't want a minute of this lovely time to be sad. When we were in town, I fancied you were down—about something; now, you are yourself again; let me be happy without alloy. I am determined to be the *cigale* of the French fable, and dance and sing away the summer. Between us, we may even succeed in making that sober Cranbrooke a reflection of us 169
both. There, now, the light has faded; quicken your speed; we must go ashore and meet him. See, the moon has risen—O Max darling, to please me, paddle in that silver path!"

This was the Ethel her husband liked best to see,—a child in her quick variations of emotion, a woman in steadfast tenderness. Conquering his own strongly excited feeling, he smiled on her indulgently; and when, their landing reached, Cranbrooke's tall form was descried coming down the bridge to receive them, he was able to greet his friend with an unshadowed face.

The three went in to dinner, which Ethel, taking advantage of the soft, dry air, had ordered to be served in a *loggia* opening upon the water. The butler, a sympathetic Swede, had decked their little round table with wild roses in shades of shell-pink, deepening to crimson. The candles, burning under pale-green shades, were scarcely stirred by the faint breeze. Hard, indeed, to believe that, upon occasion, that couchant monster, the bay, could break up into huge waves, ramping shoreward, leaping over the rock wall, upon the lawn, up to the *loggia* floor, and there 170
beat for admission to the house, upon storm-shutters hastily erected to meet its onslaught!

To-night, a swinging lantern of wrought iron sent down through its panels of opal glass a gentle illumination upon three well-pleased faces gathered around the dainty little feast. Ethel, who, in the days of gipsying, would allow no toilets of ceremony, retained her sailor-hat, with the boat-gown of white serge, in which her infantile beauty showed to its best advantage. Cranbrooke was dazzled by the new bloom upon her face, the new light in her eye.

Pollock, too, tall, broad-shouldered, blonde, clean-shaven save for a mustache, his costume of white flannel enhancing duly the transparent healthiness of his complexion, looked wonderfully well—so Cranbrooke thought and said.

"Does he not?" cried Ethel, exultingly. "I knew you would think so. Max has been reconstructed since we have lived outdoors in this wonderful air. Just wait, Mr. Cranbrooke, till we have done 171
with you, and you, too, will be blossoming like the rose."

"I, that was a desert, you would say," returned Cranbrooke, smiling. Involuntarily it occurred to him to contrast his own outer man with that of his host. Somehow or other, the fond, satisfied look Ethel bestowed upon her lord aroused anew in their friend an old, teasing spirit of envy of nature's bounty to another, denied to him.

As the moon transmuted to silver the stretch of water east of them, and the three sat over the table, with its *carafes* and decanters and egg-shell coffee-cups, till the flame of a cigar-lighter died utterly in its silver beak, their talk touching all subjects pleasantly, Cranbrooke persuaded himself he had indeed been dreaming a bad dream. The journey thither, of which every mile had been like the link of a chain, was, for him, after all, a mere essay at pleasure-seeking. He had come on to spend a jolly holiday with a couple of the nicest people in the world—nothing more! His fancies, his plans, his devices, conceived in sore distress of spirit, were relegated to the world 172
of shadows, whence they had been summoned.

When Ethel left the two men for the night, and the butler came out to collect his various belongings, Pollock rose and bade Cranbrooke accompany him to see the mountains from the other side of the house. Here, turning their backs on the enchantment of the water view, they looked up at an amphitheatre of hills, dominated in turn by rocky summits gleaming in the moon. But for the lap of the water upon the coast, the stir of a fresh wind arising to whisper to the leaves of a clump of birches, Mother Earth around them was keeping silent vigil.

"What a perfect midsummer night!" said Cranbrooke, drawing a deep breath of enjoyment. "After the heat and dust of that three hundred miles of railway journey from Boston, this *is* a reward!"

"We chose better than we knew the scene of my euthanasia," answered Pollock, without a tremor in his voice.

A thrill ran through Cranbrooke's veins. He could have sworn the air had suddenly become chill, 173
as if an iceberg had floated into the bay. He tried to respond, and found himself babbling words of weak conventionality; and all the while the soul of the strong man within him was saying: "It must not be. It shall not be. If I live, I shall rescue you from this ghastly phantom."

"Don't think it necessary to give words to what you feel for me," said Pollock, smiling slightly. "You are not making a brilliant success of it, old man, and you'd better stop. And don't suppose I mean to continue to entertain my guest by lugubrious discussions of my approaching *finale*. Only, it is necessary that you should know several things, since the event may take us unawares. I have made you my executor, and Ethel gets all there is; that's the long and short of my will, properly signed, attested, and deposited with my lawyer before I left town. Ethel's mother and sisters will be returning to Newport in a fortnight, and they will, no doubt, come to the poor child when she needs them. There *must* be some compensation for a decree of this kind, and I have it in the 174
absolute bliss I have enjoyed since we came here. That child-wife of mine is the most enchanting creature in the world. If I were not steeped in selfishness, I could wish she loved me a little less. But all emotions pass, and even Ethel's tears will dry."

"Good Heaven, Max, you are talking like a machine! One would think this affair of yours certain. Who are you, to dare to penetrate the mystery of the decrees of your Maker—"

"None of that, if you please, Cranbrooke," interrupted Pollock; "I have fought every inch of the way along there, by myself, and have been conquered by my conviction. Did I tell you that my father, before me, struggled with similar remonstrances from *his* friends? The parsons even brought bell and book to exorcise his tormentor—and all in vain. He was snuffed out in full health, as I shall be, and why should I whine at following him? Come, my dear fellow, I am keeping you out of a capital bed, from sleep you must require. There's but one matter in which you can serve me,—take Ethel into your care. Win her fullest confidence; let her know that when I am not there, *you will be*." 175

Cranbrooke went to his room, but not to rest. When his friends next saw him, he was returning from a solitary cruise about the bay in a catboat Pollock kept at anchor near their wharf.

"Why, Mr. Cranbrooke!" cried Ethel, lightly. "The boatman says you have been out ever since daybreak. But that we espied the boat tacking about beyond that far rock, I should have been for sending in search of you."

"Cranbrooke is an accomplished sailor," said Max. "But just now, breakfast's the thing for him, Ethel. See that he is well fed, while I stroll out to the stable and look after the horses."

As he crossed the greensward, Ethel's gaze followed him, till he disappeared behind a clump of trees. Then she turned to her guest.

"Let me serve you with all there is, until they bring you something hot," she said, with her usual half-flippant consideration of him. "Do you know you look very seedy? I have, for my part, no patience with these early morning exploits." 176

"If you could have seen the world awakening as I saw it, this morning, you would condone my offence," he answered, a curious expression Ethel thought she had detected in his eyes leaving them unclouded, as he spoke. 177

Chapter III

No one who knew Stephen Cranbrooke well could say he did anything by halves. In the days that followed his arrival at Mount Desert, Max Pollock saw that his friend was lending every effort to the task of establishing friendly relations with his wife. From her first half-petulant, half-cordial manner with him,—the manner of a woman who tries to please her husband by recognition of the claim of his nearest male intimate,—Ethel had passed to the degree of manifestly welcoming Cranbrooke's presence, both when with her husband and without him.

As Max saw this growing friendship, he strove to increase it by absenting himself from Ethel, instead of, as heretofore, spending every hour he could wring from the society of other folk, in the light of her smiles. His one wish that Ethel might be insensibly led to find another than himself companionable; that she might be, though never so little, weaned from her absolute dependence upon him for daily happiness, before the blow fell that was to plunge her in darkest night, kept him content in these acts of self-sacrifice. 178

But, as was inevitable, his manner toward them both underwent a trifling change. His old buoyancy of affection was succeeded by a quiet, at times wistful, recognition of the fact that his friend and his wife had now found another interest besides himself. But he was proud to see Cranbrooke had justified his boast that he "could be fascinating when he chose;" and he was glad to think Cranbrooke at last realized the charm Ethel, apparently a mere bright bubble upon the tide of society, had to a man of intellect and heart. "It was as I said," the poor fellow repeated to himself, trying to find comfort in the realization of his prescience; and when Ethel, alone with him, would break into pæans of his friend, and wonder how she could have been so blind to the "real man" before, Max answered her loyally that his highest wish for both of them was at last gratified. 179

Then the day came when there was question of a companion for Ethel in a sailing-party to which she had accepted an invitation—and for Max was destined an emotion something like distaste.

They were sitting over the breakfast table,—a meal no longer exclusive to wife and husband, as had been agreed, but shared by Cranbrooke with due regularity,—when Ethel broached the subject.

"You know, Max, I was foolish enough to promise that irresistible Mrs. Clayton—when she would not take no for an answer, yesterday,—that *some* of us would join her water party to-day. It is to be an idle cruise, with no especial aim—luncheon on board their schooner-yacht; the sort of thing I knew would bore you to extinction—being huddled up with the same people half the day."

"It is the opening wedge—if you go to this, you will be booked for others, that's all," said Max, preparing to say, in a martyrized way, that he would accompany her, if she liked. 180

"Oh, I knew you would feel that; and so I told her she must really excuse my husband, but that I

had no doubt Mr. Cranbrooke would accept with pleasure. You see, Mr. Cranbrooke, what polite inaccuracies you are pledged by friendship to sustain."

"I *will* go with pleasure," Stephen said, with what Max thought almost unnecessary readiness.

"Bravo!" cried Ethel. "This is the hero's spirit. And so, Max dear, you will have a long day to yourself while I am experimenting in fashionable pleasuring, and Mr. Cranbrooke is representing you in keeping an eye on me."

"You will, of course, be at home to dinner?" said her husband.

"Surely. Unless breezes betray us, and we are driven to support exhausted nature upon hardtack and champagne; for, of course, all of the Claytons' luncheon will be eaten up, and there are no stores aboard a craft like that. Will you order the buckboard for ten, dear? We rendezvous at the boat-wharf. And, as there is no telling when we shall be in, don't trouble to send to meet me. Mr. 181
Cranbrooke and I will pick up a trap to return in."

Max saw them off in the buckboard; and, as Ethel turned at some little distance and looked back at him, where he still stood on the gravel before their vine-wreathed portal, waving her hand with a charming grace, then settling again to a *tête-à-tête* with Cranbrooke, he felt vaguely resentful at being left behind.

The clear, dazzling atmosphere, the sense of youthful vitality in his being, made him repel the idea of exclusion from any function of the animated world. He almost thought Ethel should have given him a chance to say whether or no he would accompany her. Was it not, upon her part, even a little bit—a *very* little bit, lacking in proper wifely feeling, to be so prompt in dispensing with his society, to accept that of others for a whole, long, bright summer's day of pleasuring?

This suggestion he put away from him as quickly as it came. He was like a spoiled child, he said to himself, who does not expect to be taken at his word. Ethel well knew his dislike of gossiping groups of idle people; equally well she remembered, no doubt, his frequent requests that she 182
would mingle more with the world, take more pleasure on her own account. And Cranbrooke,—dear old Cranbrooke,—of course he was ready to punish himself by going off on such a party, when it was an opportunity to serve his friend!

So Max put his discontent away, and, mounting his horse, went off alone for a ride half around the island, lunching at Northeast Harbor, and returning, through devious ways, by nightfall.

Restored to healthy enjoyment of all things by his day in the saddle, he turned into the avenue leading to their house, buoyed up by the sweet hope of Ethel returned—Ethel on the watch for him. Already, he saw in fancy the gleam of her jaunty white yachting-costume between the tubs of flowering hydrangeas ranged on either side the walk before their door. The lamps inside—the "home lights," of which she had once fondly spoken to him—were already lighted. She would, perhaps, be worrying at his delay. He quickened his speed, and rode down the avenue to the 183
house at a brisk trot. The groom, who, from the stable, had heard the horse's feet, started up out of the shrubbery to meet him. But there was no other indication of a watch upon the movements of the master of the house.

"Mrs. Pollock has not returned, then?" he asked, conscious of blankness in his tone.

"No, sir; not yet. Our orders were, not to send for her, sir, as there was no knowing when the party would get in."

"Yes, the breeze has pretty much died out since sunset," said Pollock, endeavoring to mask his disappointment by commonplace.

He went indoors; and the house, carefully arranged though it was, with flowers and furniture disposed by expert hands to greet the returning of the master, seemed to him dull and chill. He ordered a cup of tea for himself, and, bending down, put a match to the little fire of birch-wood always kept laid upon the hearth of their picturesque hall sitting-room.

In a moment, the curling wreathes of pale azure that arose upon the pyre of silvery-barked logs 184
was succeeded by a generous flame. The peculiarly sweet flavor of the burning birch was distilled upon the air. Sipping the cup of tea, as he stood in his riding-clothes before the fire, Max felt a consoling warmth invade his members and expand his heart.

"They will be in directly," he said; "and, by George, I shall be as ready for my dinner as they for theirs."

In one corner of the hall stood a tall, slender-necked vase, where he had that morning watched Ethel arranging a sheaf of goldenrod with brown-seeded marsh-grasses,—a combination her touch had made individual and artistic to a striking degree. He recalled how, as she had finished it, she looked around, calling him and Stephen from their newspapers to admire her handiwork. He, the husband, had admired it lazily from his divan of cushions in the corner. Cranbrooke had gone over to stand beside his hostess, and thence they had passed, still in close conversation, out to the grassy terrace above the sea.

Now, why should this recollection awaken in Max Pollock a new sense of the feeling he had been 185
doing his best to dispose of all day? He could not say; but there it was, to prick him with its invisible sting. Then, too, the dinner-hour was past, and he was hungry.

He went out upon the veranda at the rear, and surveyed the expanse of water. Far off, between the electric ball that hung over the wharf of the village, and the point of Bar Island, opposite, he saw a bridge of lights from yachts of all sorts, with which the harbor was now full. He fancied a little moving star of light, that seemed to creep beneath the large ones, might be the Claytons' boat on her return, and, after another interval of watching, called up a wharf authority by telephone, and asked if the *Lorelei* was in.

"Not yet, sir," was the reply. "Probably caught out when the wind fell. Will let you know the minute they are in sight." With which assurance Mr. Pollock was finally driven by the pangs of natural appetite to sit down alone to a cheerless meal.

There was a message by telephone, as he finished his repast. The *Lorelei* was in, and Mrs. Pollock desired to speak with her husband. 186

"We're all right," Ethel's voice said, "and I hope you haven't been worried. They *insist* on our going to dinner at a restaurant, and, of course, you understand, I can't spoil the fun by refusing. *Couldn't* you come down and meet us?"

His first impulse was to say yes; but a second thought withheld him. He gave her a pleasant answer, however, bidding her enjoy herself without thought of him, and adding: "Cranbrooke will look out for you and bring you home."

It was quite ten o'clock when they arrived at the cottage, Ethel in high spirits, flushed with the excitement of a merry day, full of chatter over people and things Max had no interest in, appealing to Cranbrooke to enjoy her retrospects with her. She was "awfully sorry" about having kept Max from his dinner; "awfully sorry" not to have come home at once, but there was no getting out of the impromptu dinner; and, of course, they had to wait for it; and she was the first, after dinner, to make the move to go; Mr. Cranbrooke would certify to that. 187

"I don't need any certification, dear," said Max, gently; but he did not smile. Cranbrooke, who sat with him after sleepy Ethel had retired from the scene, felt his heart wrung at thought of certain things that never entered into Ethel's little head. But he made no effort to dispel the cloud that had settled over his friend's face.

By and by, Cranbrooke, too, said good-night, and went off into his wing, and Max was left alone with his cigar.

The day on the water had verified Max's prediction that it would prove "an opening wedge." Ethel, caught in the tide of the season's gaieties, found herself impelled from one entertainment to the other; their cottage was invaded by callers, their little informal dinners were transformed into banquets of ceremony, as choice and more lively than those of their conventional life in town. The only persons really satisfied by the change of habits in the house were the servants, who, like all artists, require a public to set the seal upon their worth. 188

Max, bewildered, found himself sometimes accompanying his wife to her parties; oftener—struck with the ghastly inappropriateness of his presence in such haunts—stopping at home and deputing to Cranbrooke the escort of his wife. To his surprise, he perceived that Cranbrooke was not only ready, but eager, on all occasions, to carry Ethel away from him. But then, of course, this was precisely what he had wished.

And Ethel, who lost no opportunity to tell Max how "good," how "lovely," Cranbrooke had been to her, was she not carrying out to the letter her husband's wishes? He observed, moreover, that Ethel was even more impressed than he had expected her to be with that quality of "fascination." Cranbrooke's mind was like a beautiful new country into which she was making excursions, she said once; and Max, after a moment's hesitation, agreed with her very warmly.

At last, Maxwell Pollock awoke one morning, with a start of disagreeable consciousness, to the fact that this was the eve of his thirtieth birthday. Occupied as he had been with various thoughts that had to do with his transient relations to this sublunary sphere, he had actually allowed himself to lose sight of the swift approach of his day of doom. Now, he arose, took his bath, dressed, and without arousing his wife, who, in the room adjoining, slept profoundly after a gay dance overnight, went alone to the waterside, with the intention of going out in his canoe. 189

Early as he was, Cranbrooke was before him, carrying the canoe upon his head, moving after the fashion of some queer shelled-creature down to the float.

Max realized, with a sense of keen self-rebuke, that the spectacle of his friend was repellant to him, and the prospect of a talk alone with Stephen on this occasion, the last thing he would have chosen.

And—evidently a part of the latter-day revolution of affairs—Cranbrooke seemed to have forgotten that this day meant more than another to Pollock. He greeted him cheerily, in commonplace terms, commented on their identity of fancy in the matter of a paddle at sunrise, and offered to relinquish the craft in favor of its owner. 190

"Of course not. Get in, will you," said Max, throwing off his coat; and, taking one of the paddles, while Cranbrooke plied the other, their swift, even strokes soon carried them far over toward the illuminated east.

When well out upon the bay, they paused to watch the red coming of the sun. Beautiful with

matin freshness was the sleeping world around them; and, inspired by the scene, Max, who was kneeling in the bow, turned to exclaim to Cranbrooke, with his old, hearty voice, upon the reward coming to early risers in such surroundings.

"Jove, a man feels born again when he breathes air like this!"

Cranbrooke started. It was almost beyond hope that Max should use such a phrase, in such accents, at such a juncture. Immediately, however, the exhilaration died out of Pollock's manner; and, again turning away his face, he showed that his thoughts had reverted to the old sore spot. 191
He did not see the expression of almost womanly yearning in Cranbrooke's face when the certainty of this was fixed upon his anxious mind.

The two men talked little, and of casual things only, while abroad. As they returned to the house, Cranbrooke made a movement as if to speak out something burning upon his tongue, and then, repressing it, walked with hasty strides to his own apartment.

The day passed as had done those immediately preceding it. Calls, a party of guests at luncheon, a drive, absorbed Ethel's hours from her husband. When she reached home, at tea-time, he had come in from riding, and was standing alone in the hall, awaiting her.

"How nice to find you here alone!" she cried, going up to kiss him, and then taking her place behind the tea-tray. "Do sit down, and let us imagine we are back in those dear old days before we were overpowered by outsiders. Never mind! The rush will soon be over; we shall be to ourselves again, you and I and—how stupid I am!" she added, coloring. "You and I, I mean, for he 192
must go back to town."

"You mean Cranbrooke?" he said, as she thought, absent-mindedly, but in reality with something like a cold hand upon his heart, that for a moment gave him a sense of physical apprehension. Had *it* come, he wondered?

But no, this was not physical; this was a shock of purely emotional displeasure. Could he believe his ears, that Ethel, his wife, had indeed blended another than himself with her dream of returning solitude?

"Yes, it will be all over soon," he said, mechanically. "Had you a pleasant drive? And did you enjoy the box-seat with Egmont?"

"Oh! Egmont, fortunately, can drive—if he *can't* talk," she answered, lightly. "I suppose I am fastidious, or else spoiled for the conversation of ordinary men, after what I have had recently from Cranbrooke. By the way, Max dear, are you relentless against going with us to-night, to the *fête* at the canoe club? You needn't go inside the club-house, you know. It will be lovely to look at, 193
from the water."

"With *us*? Then Cranbrooke has already promised?"

"Yes, of course; he could not leave me in the lurch, could he, when my husband is such an obstinate recluse?"

"And how do you intend to get there?"

"By water, stupid, of course; how else? I will be satisfied with the rowboat, if you won't trust me in the canoe; but Mr. Cranbrooke is such an expert with the paddle, I shouldn't think you would object to letting me go with him. It will be perfectly smooth water, and the air is so mild. Do say I may go in the canoe, dear; it's twice the fun."

"I think you know that, unless I take you, it is my wish you go nowhere at night in a canoe," he answered, coldly.

Ethel was more hurt at his tone than disappointed by his refusal. She could not think what had come over her husband, of late, so often had this constrained manner presented itself to her advance. She set it down to her unwonted indulgence in society, and promised herself, with a 194
sigh of relinquishment, that, after this summer, she would go back to her life lived for Max alone.

Then, Cranbrooke coming in with two or three visitors, who lingered till almost dinner-time and were persuaded easily to stop for dinner, there was no chance to indulge in meditations, penitential or otherwise. When her guests took their departure, it was in the little steam-launch, she and Cranbrooke accompanying the party, and all bound for the *fête*, to be given on a wooded island in the bay. As they were leaving the house, something impelled her to run back and, in the semi-darkness of the veranda, seek her husband's side.

"Max darling, kiss me good-by. Or, if you want me, let me stay with you."

"No, no; I want you to enjoy every moment while you can," he said, withdrawing from her gaze to the shadow of a vine-wreathed column.

"Max, your voice is strange. And once, at dinner, I saw you looking at me, and there was something in your eyes that frightened me. If you hadn't smiled, and lifted your glass to pledge 195
me, I should not have known what to think."

"Ethel! Wife! Do you love me?" he said, catching her to his heart.

"Max! Why, Max! You foolish boy, we shall be seen."

"Tell me, and kiss me once more, my own, my own!"

"They are all aboard except you, Mrs. Pollock," a voice said; and, from the dew of the lawn, Cranbrooke stepped upon the veranda.

Max started violently, and let his wife go from his embrace.

"You see how rude you are making me toward our guests," said Ethel. "You have my wrap, Mr. Cranbrooke? Good-night, Max; and to-morrow I'll tell you all about it. Better change your mind and come after us, though."

"Max need not trouble to do so," put in Cranbrooke, in a muffled voice. "As usual, I will fill his place."

Max thought he almost hurried her away. They went down the slope of the lawn together; and, at the steep descent leading to the bridge, he saw Ethel stumble, and Cranbrooke throw his arm around her to steady her. 196

And now, a passion took possession of Maxwell Pollock's being that impelled him to the impetuous action of following them to the wharf, and gesticulating madly after the swift little steamer that bore them away from him.

"He dared take her, did he, when she would have stayed at a word from me? I see all, now. Specious, false, damnably false, he has snared her fancy in his net. But she loves me, I'll swear she loves me, and I'll snatch her from him, if it is with the last effort of my strength. Is there time? Well, what is to come, let it come! While there's life in me, she is mine."

A moment, and he was afloat in the canoe, no sign of weakness in his powerful stroke with the paddle, no thought in his brain but the one intense determination of the male creature to wrest his beloved from the hands of his rival.

Every one conceded this to be quite the prettiest and most taking event of the season. The rustic club-house, its peaked gable and veranda defined with strings of colored lanterns, sent forth the music of a band, while to its portal trooped maidens and cavaliers, landing at the wharf from every variety of craft. The woods behind were linked with chains of light, the shore below lit with bonfires, and more evanescent eruptions of many-hued fireworks. Rockets hissed through the air, and broke in a rain of violet, green, and crimson meteors, till the zenith was a tangled mesh made by the trails of them; fire-balloons arose and were lost among the stars; little fire-boats, launched from vessels stocked for the purpose, bore their blazing cargoes out upon the tide; other unnamed monsters were let loose to carry apparent destruction zigzag through the waves. Every attendant yacht, sloop, launch, rowboat, or canoe, with which the water about the island was covered, carried quaint decoration in the guise of Chinese lanterns. Some of the smaller boats were arched with these; others tossed bouquets of fiery bubbles into the air. Creeping about at a snail's pace among the crowded boats, invisible canoes carried silent passengers; an occasional "oh!" of exclamation at the beauty of the scene, the only contribution people felt inclined to make to conversation. It was a pageant of bedazzlement, as if witches, gnomes, spirits of earth, air, and the underworld, had mingled their resources to enchant the eyes of mortals. And over all, sailed the lady-moon serenely, forgotten, but sure that her time would come again. 197 198

Max found his launch without difficulty, on the outer circle of the amphitheatre of light. As he had divined, it was empty, save for the two boatmen.

"The ladies went ashore, sir," one of his men said, in answer to his inquiry. "All but Mrs. Pollock, sir."

"Mrs. Pollock? Where is she, then?" he asked, briefly.

"She took our rowboat, sir, and went off on the water with one of the gentlemen. Mr. Cranbrooke, I think it was; and they ordered us to wait just here. No good going ashore, sir, if you want to see. It's better from this point, even, than nearer in." 199

"Very well," said the master, and at once his canoe moved off to be lost in the crowd.

He had sought for them in vain, peering into all the small boats whenever the flash-light of the rockets, or the catharine-wheels on the coast, lit the scene. Many a tender interlude was thus revealed; but of the two people he now longed with the fever of madness to discover, he saw nothing.

At last, in a burst from a candle rocket, there was a glimpse of Ethel's red boat-cloak, her bare, golden head rising above it. She was sitting in the stern of the rowboat, Cranbrooke beside her, their bow above water, their oars negligently trailing. Ethel's eyes were fixed upon the glittering panorama; but Cranbrooke's eyes were riveted on her.

With an oath, Max drove his paddle fiercely into the sea. The canoe sped forward like an arrow. Blind with anger, he did not observe that he was directly in the track of a little steamer laden with new arrivals, turning in toward the wharf. 200

A new day dawned before the doctors, who had been all night battling for Maxwell Pollock's life, left him restored to consciousness, and reasonably secure of carrying no lasting ill effect from the blow on his head received by collision with the steamer.

Carried under with his canoe, he had arisen to full view in the glare from a "set piece" of fireworks on the shore, beside the boat containing Cranbrooke and his wife. It was Cranbrooke, not Ethel, who identified the white face coming to the surface within reach of his hand, then sinking again out of sight. It was Cranbrooke, also, who sprang to Pollock's rescue, and, floating with his inert body, was dragged with him aboard the launch.

As the rosy light of the east came to play upon Pollock's features, he opened his eyes for the first time with a look of intelligence. At his bedside, Ethel was kneeling, her whole loving soul in her gaze.

"Is this—I thought it was heaven," he said, feeling for her hand.

"It is heaven for me, now that I have you back, my own darling," she answered, through happy tears. 201

"Have I been here long?"

"A few hours since the accident. The doctors say you will be none the worse for it. And, Max dear, only think! This is your birthday! Your thirtieth birthday! Many, many, *many* happy returns!" and she punctuated her wish with warm kisses.

At that juncture, Cranbrooke came into the room and stood at the side of the bed opposite Ethel, who had no eyes for him, but kept on gazing at her recovered treasure as if she could never have enough.

Max, though aware of Stephen's presence, made no movement of recognition, till Ethel spoke in playful chiding.

"Darling! Where are your manners? Aren't you going to speak to our friend, and thank him for saving you—saving you for *me*, thank God!"

She buried her face in the bed-clothes, overcome with the recollection; but even with the exquisite tenderness of her accents thrilling in his ear, Max remained obstinately dumb to Stephen Cranbrooke. 202

"Forgive him; he is not himself!" pleaded Ethel, as she saw Cranbrooke about to go dejectedly out of the room.

"Some day he will understand me," answered Stephen, with a gallant effort at self-control. Then, withdrawing, he murmured to himself: "But he will never know that, in playing with his edged tools, it is I who have got the death-blow."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A VIRGINIA COUSIN, & BAR HARBOR TALES ***

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