THE LADY OF THE AROOSTOOK Vol. I

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BY

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THE

LADY OF THE AROOSTOOK.

I.

IN the best room of a farm-house on the skirts of a village in the hills of Northern Massachusetts, there sat one morning in August three people who were not strangers to the house, but who had apparently assembled in the parlour as the place most in accord with an unaccustomed finery in their dress. One was an elderly woman with a plain, honest face, as kindly in expression as she could be perfectly sure she felt, and no more; she rocked herself softly in the haircloth arm-chair, and addressed as father the old man who sat at one end of the table between the windows, and drubbed noiselessly upon it with his stubbed fingers, while his lips, puckered to a whistle, emitted no

sound. His face had that distinctly fresh-shaven effect which once a week is the advantage of shaving no oftener: here and there, in the deeper wrinkles, a frosty stubble had escaped the razor. He wore an old-fashioned, low black satin stock, over the top of which the linen of his unstarched collar contrived with difficulty to make itself seen; his high-crowned, lead-coloured straw hat lay on the table before him. At the other end of the table sat a young girl, who leaned upon it with one arm, propping her averted face on her hand. The window was open beside her, and she was staring out upon the door-yard, where the hens were burrowing for coolness in the soft earth under the lilac bushes; from time to time she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I don't like this part of it, father," said the elderly woman,—"Lyddy's seeming to feel about it the way she does right at the last moment, as you may say." The old man made a noise in his throat as if he might speak; but he only unpuckered his mouth, and stayed his fingers, while the other continued: "I don't want her to go now, no more than ever I did. I ain't one to think that eatin' up everything on your plate keeps it from wastin', and I never was; and I say

that even if you couldn't get the money back, it would cost no more to have her stay than to have her go."

"I don't suppose," said the old man, in a high, husky treble, "but what I could get some of it back from the captain; maybe all. He didn't seem any ways graspin'. I don't want Lyddy should feel, any more than you do, Maria, that we 're glad to have her go. But what I look at is this: as long as she has this idea— Well, it 's like this— I d'know as I can express it, either." He relapsed into the comfort people find in giving up a difficult thing.

"Oh, I know!" returned the woman. "I understand it 's an opportunity; you might call it a leadin', almost, that it would be flyin' in the face of Providence to refuse. I presume her gifts were given her for improvement, and it would be the same as buryin' them in the ground for her to stay up here. But I do say that I want Lyddy should feel just *so* about goin', or not go at all. It ain't like goin' among strangers, though, if it *is* in a strange land. They 're her father's own kin, and if they 're any ways like him they 're warm-*hearted* enough, if that 's all you want. I guess they 'll do what 's right by Lyddy when she gets there.

And I try to look at it this way: that long before that maple by the gate is red she'll be with her father's own sister; and I for one don't mean to let it worry me." She made search for her handkerchief, and wiped away the tears that fell down her cheeks.

"Yes," returned the old man; "and before the leaves are on the ground we shall more'n have got our first letter from her. I declare for 't," he added, after a tremulous pause, "I was goin' to say how Lyddy would enjoy readin' it to us! I don't seem to get it rightly into my head that she's goin' away."

"It ain't as if Lyddy was leavin' any life behind her that 's over and above pleasant," resumed the woman. "She 's a good girl, and I never want to see a more uncomplainin'; but I know it 's duller and duller here all the while for her; with us two old folks, and no young company; and I d' know as it 's been any better the two winters she 's taught in the Mill Village. That 's what reconciles me, on Lyddy's account, as much as anything. I ain't one to set much store on worldly ambition, and I never was; and I d' know as I care for Lyddy's advancement, as you may call it. I believe that as far forth as true happiness goes she 'd be as well

off here as there. But I don't say but what she would be more satisfied in the end, and as long as you can't have happiness, in this world, I say you 'd better have satisfaction. Is that Josiah Whitman's hearse goin' past?" she asked, rising from her chair, and craning forward to bring her eyes on a level with the window, while she suspended the agitation of the palm-leaf fan which she had not ceased to ply during her talk; she remained a moment with the quiescent fan pressed against her bosom, and then she stepped out of the door, and down the walk to the gate. "Josiah!" she called, while the old man looked and listened at the window. "Who you be'n buryin'?"

The man halted his hearse, and answered briefly, "Mirandy Holcomb."

"Why, I thought the funeral wa'n't to be till to-morrow! Well, I declare," said the woman, as she re-entered the room and sat down again in her rocking-chair, "I didn't ask him whether it was Mr. Goodlow or Mr. Baldwin preached the sermon. I was so put out hearin' it was Mirandy, you might say I forgot to ask him anything. Mirandy was always a well woman till they moved down to the Mill Village and began takin' the hands to board,—so many of 'em.

When I think of Lyddy's teachin' there another winter,—well, I could almost rejoice that she was goin' away. She ain't a mite too strong as it is."

Here the woman paused, and the old man struck in with his quaint treble while she fanned herself in silence: "I do suppose the voyage is goin' to be everything for her health. She 'll be from a month to six weeks gettin' to Try-East, and that 'll be a complete change of air, Mr. Goodlow says. And she won't have a care on her mind the whole way out. It 'll be a season of rest and quiet. I did wish, just for the joke of the thing, as you may say, that the ship had be'n goin' straight to Venus, and Lyddy could 'a' walked right in on 'em at breakfast, some morning. I should liked it to be'n a surprise. But there wa'n't any ship at Boston loadin' for Venus, and they didn't much believe I 'd find one at New York. So I just took up with the captain of the Aroostook's offer. He says she can telegraph to her folks at Venus as soon as she gets to Try-East, and she 's welcome to stay on the ship till they come for her. I didn't think of their havin' our mod'n improvements out there; but he says they have telegraphs and railroads everywheres, the

same as we do; and they 're *real* kind and polite when you get used to 'em. The captain, he 's as nice a man as I ever see. His wife 's be'n two or three voyages with him in the Aroostook, and he 'll know just how to have Lyddy's comfort looked after. He showed me the state-room she 's goin' to have. Well, it ain't over and above large, but it 's pretty as a pink: all clean white paint, with a solid mahogany edge to the berth, and a mahogany-framed lookin'-glass on one side, and little winders at the top, and white lace curtains to the bed. He says he had it fixed up for his wife, and he lets Lyddy have it all for her own. She can set there and do her mendin' when she don't feel like comin' into the cabin. The cabin—well, I wish you could see that cabin, Maria! The first mate is a fine-appearing man, too. Some of the sailors looked pretty rough; but I guess it was as much their clothes as anything; and I d' know as Lyddy 'd *have* a great deal to do with them, any way." The old man's treble ceased, and at the same moment the shrilling of a locust in one of the door-yard maples died away; both voices, arid, nasal, and high, lapsed as one into a common silence.

The woman stirred impatiently in her

chair, as if both voices had been repeating something heard many times before. They seemed to renew her discontent. "Yes, I know; I know all that, father. But it ain't the mahogany I think of. It 's the child's gettin' there safe and well."

"Well," said the old man, "I asked the captain about the sea-sickness, and he says she ain't nigh so likely to be sick as she would on the steamer; the motion 's more regular, and she won't have the smell of the machinery. That 's what he said. And he said the sea-sickness would do her good, any way. I 'm sure I don't want her to be sick any more than you do, Maria." He added this like one who has been unjustly put upon his defence.

They now both remained silent, the woman rocking herself and fanning, and the old man holding his fingers suspended from their drubbing upon the table, and looking miserably from the woman in the rocking-chair to the girl at the window, as if a strict inquiry into the present situation might convict him of it in spite of his innocence. The girl still sat with her face turned from them, and still from time to time she put her handkerchief to her eyes and wiped away the tears. The locust in the maple began

again, and shrilled inexorably. Suddenly the girl leaped to her feet.

"There 's the stage!" she cried, with a tumult in her voice and manner, and a kind of choking sob. She showed, now that she stood upright, the slim and elegant shape which is the divine right of American girlhood, clothed with the stylishness that instinctive taste may evoke, even in a hill town, from study of paper patterns, Harper's Bazaar, and the costume of summer boarders. Her dress was carried with spirit and effect.

"Lydia Blood!" cried the other woman, springing responsively to her feet, also, and starting toward the girl, "don't you go a step without you feel just like it! Take off your things this minute and stay, if you wouldn't jus' as lives go. It 's hard enough to *have* you go, child, without seemin' to force you!"

"Oh, aunt Maria," answered the girl, piteously, "it almost kills me to go; but *I'm* doing it, not you. I know how you 'd like to have me stay. But don't say it again, or I couldn't bear up; and I 'm going now, if I have to be carried."

The old man had risen with the others; he was shorter than either, and as he looked at them he seemed half awed, half bewil-

dered, by so much drama. Yet it was comparatively very little. The girl did not offer to cast herself upon her aunt's neck, and her aunt did not offer her an embrace; it was only their hearts that clung together as they simply shook hands and kissed each other Lydia whirled away for her last look at herself in the glass over the table, and her aunt tremulously began to put to rights some slight disorder in the girl's hat.

"Father," she said sharply, "are Lyddy's things all ready there by the door, so 's not to keep Ezra Perkins waitin'? You know he always grumbles so. And then he *gets* you to the cars so 't you have to wait half an hour before they start." She continued to pin and pull at details of Lydia's dress, to which she descended from her hat. "It sets real nice on you, Lyddy. I guess you 'll think of the time we had gettin' it made up, when you wear it out there." Miss Maria Latham laughed nervously.

With a harsh banging and rattling, a yellow Concord coach drew up at the gate where Miss Maria had stopped the hearse. The driver got down, and without a word put Lydia's boxes and bags into the boot, and left two or three light parcels for her to take into the coach with her.

Miss Maria went down to the gate with her father and niece. "Take the back seat, father!" she said, as the old man offered to take the middle place. "Let them that come later have what's left. You'll be home to-night, father; I'll set up for you. Good-bye again, Lyddy." She did not kiss the girl again, or touch her hand. Their decent and sparing adieus had been made in the house. As Miss Maria returned to the door, the hens, cowering conscience-stricken under the lilacs, sprang up at sight of her with a screech of guilty alarm, and flew out over the fence.

"Well, I vow," soliloquised Miss Maria, "from where she set Lyddy must have seen them pests under the lilacs the whole time, and never said a word." She pushed the loosened soil into place with the side of her ample slipper, and then went into the house, where she kindled a fire in the kitchen stove, and made herself a cup of Japan tea: a variety of the herb which our country people prefer, apparently because it affords the same stimulus with none of the pleasure given by the Chinese leaf.

II.

LYDIA and her grandfather reached Boston at four o'clock, and the old man made a bargain, as he fancied, with an express-man to carry her baggage across the city to the wharf at which the Aroostook lay. The express-man civilly offered to take their small parcels without charge, and deliver them with the trunk and large bag; but as he could not check them all her grandfather judged it safest not to part with them, and he and Lydia crowded into the horse-car with their arms and hands full. The conductor obliged him to give up the largest of these burdens, and hung the old-fashioned oil-cloth sack on the handle of the brake behind, where Mr. Latham with keen anxiety, and Lydia with shame, watched it as it swayed back and forth with the motion of the car and threatened to break loose from its hand-straps and dash its bloated bulk to the ground. The old man called out to the conductor to be sure and stop in

Scollay's Square, and the people, who had already stared uncomfortably at Lydia's bundles, all smiled. Her grandfather was going to repeat his direction as the conductor made no sign of having heard it, when his neighbour said kindly, "The car always stops in Scollay's Square."

"Then why couldn't he say so?" retorted the old man, in his high nasal key; and now the people laughed outright. He had the nervous restlessness of age when out of its wonted place: he could not remain quiet in the car, for counting and securing his parcels; when they reached Scollay's Square, and were to change cars, he ran to the car they were to take, though there was abundant time, and sat down breathless from his effort. He was eager then that they should not be carried too far, and was constantly turning to look out of the window to ascertain their whereabouts. His vigilance ended in their getting aboard the East Boston ferry-boat in the car, and hardly getting ashore before the boat started. They now gathered up their burdens once more, and walked toward the wharf they were seeking, past those squalid streets which open upon the docks. At the corners they entangled themselves in knots of truck-teams and hucksters' wagons and

horse-cars; once they brought the traffic of the neighbourhood to a stand-still by the thoroughness of their inability and confusion. They wandered down the wrong wharf amidst the slime cast up by the fishing craft moored in the dock below, and made their way over heaps of chains and cordage, and through the hand-carts pushed hither and thither with their loads of fish, and so struggled back to the avenue which ran along the top of all the wharves. The water of the docks was of a livid turbidity, which teemed with the gelatinous globes of the sunfish; and people were rowing about there in pleasure-boats, and sailors on floats were painting the hulls of the black ships. The faces of the men they met were red and sunburned mostly,—not with the sunburn of the fields, but of the sea; these men lurched in their gait with an uncouth heaviness, yet gave them way kindly enough; but certain dull-eyed, frowzy-headed women seemed to push purposely against her grandfather, and one of them swore at Lydia for taking up all the sidewalk with her bundles. There were such dull eyes and slattern heads at the open windows of the shabby houses; and there were gaunt, bold-faced young girls who strolled up and down the pavements, bonnet-

less and hatless, and chatted into the windows, and joked with other such girls whom they met. Suddenly a wild outcry rose from the swarming children up one of the intersecting streets, where a woman was beating a small boy over the head with a heavy stick: the boy fell howling and writhing to the ground, and the cruel blows still rained upon him, till another woman darted from an open door and caught the child up with one hand, and with the other wrenched the stick away and flung it into the street. No words passed, and there was nothing to show whose child the victim was; the first woman walked off, and while the boy rubbed his head and arms, and screamed with the pain, the other children, whose sport had been scarcely interrupted, were shouting and laughing all about him again.

"Grandfather," said Lydia faintly, "let us go down here, and rest a moment in the shade. I'm almost worn out." She pointed to the open and quiet space at the side of the lofty granite warehouse which they had reached.

"Well, I guess I'll set down a minute, too," said her grandfather. "Lyddy," he added, as they released their aching arms from their bags and bundles, and sank upon

the broad threshold of a door which seemed to have been shut ever since the decay of the India trade, "I don't believe but what it would have be'n about as cheap in the end to come down in a hawk. But I acted for what I thought was the best. I supposed we 'd be'n there before now, and the idea of givin' a dollar for ridin' about ten minutes did seem sinful. I ain't noways afraid the ship will sail without you. Don't you fret any. I don't seem to know rightly just where I am, but after we 've rested a spell I 'll leave you here, and inquire round. It 's a real quiet place, and I guess your things will be safe."

He took off his straw hat and fanned his face with it, while Lydia leaned her head against the door frame and closed her eyes. Presently she heard the trampling of feet going by, but she did not open her eyes till the feet paused in a hesitating way, and a voice asked her grandfather, in the firm, neat tone which she had heard summer boarders from Boston use, "Is the young lady ill?" She now looked up, and blushed like fire to see two handsome young men regarding her with frank compassion.

"No," said her grandfather; "a little beat out, that 's all. We 've been trying to

find Lucas Wharf, and we don't seem somehow just to hit on it."

"This is Lucas Wharf," said the young man. He made an instinctive gesture of salutation toward his hat, with the hand in which he held a cigar; he put the cigar into his mouth as he turned from them, and the smoke drifted fragrantly back to Lydia as he tramped steadily and strongly on down the wharf, shoulder to shoulder with his companion.

"Well, I declare for 't, so it is," said her grandfather, getting stiffly to his feet and retiring a few paces to gain a view of the building at the base of which they had been sitting. "Why, I might known it by this buildin'! But where 's the Aroostook, if this is Lucas Wharf?" He looked wistfully in the direction the young men had taken, but they were already too far to call after.

"Grandfather," said the girl, "do I look pale?"

"Well, you don't now," answered the old man, simply. "You 've got a good colour now."

"What right had he," she demanded, "to speak to you about me?"

"I d' know but what you did look rather

pale, as you set there with your head leaned back. I d' know as I noticed much."

"He took us for two beggars,—two tramps!" she exclaimed, "sitting here with our bundles scattered round us!"

The old man did not respond to this conjecture; it probably involved matters beyond his emotional reach, though he might have understood them when he was younger. He stood a moment with his mouth puckered to a whistle, but made no sound, and retired a step or two further from the building and looked up at it again. Then he went toward the dock and looked down into its turbid waters, and returned again with a face of hopeless perplexity. "This is Lucas Wharf, and no mistake," he said. "I know the place first-rate, now. But what I can't make out is, What 's got the Aroostook?"

A man turned the corner of the warehouse from the street above, and came briskly down towards them, with his hat off, and rubbing his head and face with a circular application of a red silk handkerchief. He was dressed in a suit of blue flannel, very neat and shapely, and across his ample waistcoat stretched a gold watch chain; in his left hand he carried a white Panama hat. He was short and stout; his round florid face

was full of a sort of prompt kindness; his small blue eyes twinkled under shaggy brows whose sandy colour had not yet taken the grizzled tone of his close-clipped hair and beard. From his clean wristbands his hands came out, plump and large; stiff, wiry hairs stood up on their backs, and under these various designs in tattooing showed their purple.

Lydia's grandfather stepped out to meet and halt this stranger, as he drew near, glancing quickly from the girl to the old man, and then at their bundles. "Can you tell me where a ship named the Aroostook is, that was layin' at this wharf — Lucas Wharf—a fortnight ago, and better?"

"Well, I guess I can, Mr. Latham," answered the stranger, with a quizzical smile, offering one of his stout hands to Lydia's grandfather. "You don't seem to remember your friends very well, do you?"

The old man gave a kind of crow expressive of an otherwise unutterable relief and comfort. "Well, if it ain't Captain Jenness! I be'n so turned about, I declare for 't, I don't believe I'd ever known you if you hadn't spoke up. Lyddy," he cried with a child-like joy, "this is Captain Jenness!"

Captain Jenness having put on his hat changed Mr. Latham's hand into his left,

while he stretched his great right hand across it and took Lydia's long, slim fingers in its grasp, and looked keenly into her face. "Glad to see you, glad to see you, Miss Blood. (You see I 've got your name down on my papers.) Hope you 're well. Ever been a sea-voyage before? Little homesick, eh?" he asked, as she put her handkerchief to her eyes. He kept pressing Lydia's hand in the friendliest way. "Well, that 's natural. And you 're excited; that 's natural, too. But we 're not going to have any home sickness on the Aroostook, because we 're going to make her home *to* you." At this speech all the girl's gathering forlornness broke in a sob. "That 's right!" said Captain Jenness. "Bless you, I 've got a girl just about your age up at Deer Isle, myself!" He dropped her hand, and put his arm across her shoulders. "Good land, I know what girls are, I hope! These your things?" He caught up the greater part of them into his capacious hands, and started off down the wharf, talking back at Lydia and her grandfather, as they followed him with the light parcels he had left them. "I hauled away from the wharf as soon as I 'd stowed my cargo, and I 'm at anchor out there in the stream now, waiting till I can finish up a few

matters of business with the agents and get my passengers on board. When you get used to the strangeness," he said to Lydia, "you won't be a bit lonesome. Bless your heart! my wife 's been with me many a voyage, and the last time I was out to Messina I had both my daughters."

At the end of the wharf, Captain Jenness stopped, and suddenly calling out, "Here!" began, as she thought, to hurl Lydia's things into the water. But when she reached the same point, she found they had all been caught, and deposited in a neat pile in a boat which lay below, where two sailors stood waiting the captain's further orders. He keenly measured the distance to the boat with his eye, and then he bade the men work round outside a schooner which lay near; and jumping on board this vessel, he helped Lydia and her grandfather down, and easily transferred them to the small boat. The men bent to their oars, and pulled swiftly out toward a ship that lay at anchor a little way off. A light breeze crept along the water, which was here blue and clear, and the grateful coolness and pleasant motion brought light into the girl's cheeks and eyes. Without knowing it she smiled. "That 's right!" cried Captain Jenness, who had ap-

plauded her sob in the same terms. "*You'll* like it, first-rate. Look at that ship! *That's* the Aroostook. *Is* she a beauty, or ain't she?"

The stately vessel stood high from the water, for Captain Jenness's cargo was light, and he was going out chiefly for a return freight. Sharp jibs and staysails cut their white outlines keenly against the afternoon blue of the summer heaven; the topsails and courses dripped, half furled, from the yards stretching across the yellow masts that sprang so far aloft; the hull glistened black with new paint. When Lydia mounted to the deck she found it as clean scrubbed as her aunt's kitchen floor. Her glance of admiration was not lost upon Captain Jenness. "Yes, Miss Blood," said he, "one difference between an American ship and any other sort is dirt. I wish I could take you aboard an English vessel, so you could appreciate the Aroostook. But I guess you don't need it," he added, with a proud satisfaction in his laugh. "The Aroostook ain't in order yet; wait till we've been a few days at sea." The captain swept the deck with a loving eye. It was spacious and handsome, with a stretch of some forty or fifty feet between the house at the stern and the forecastle, which rose considerably higher; a low bulwark was surmounted by

a heavy rail supported upon turned posts painted white. Everything, in spite of the captain's boastful detraction, was in perfect trim, at least to landfolk's eyes. "Now come into the cabin," said the captain. He gave Lydia's traps, as he called them, in charge of a boy, while he led the way below, by a narrow stairway, warning Lydia and her grandfather to look out for their heads as they followed. "There!" he said, when they had safely arrived, inviting their inspection of the place with a general glance of his own.

"What did I tell you, Lyddy?" asked her grandfather, with simple joy in the splendours about them. "Solid mahogany trimmin's everywhere." There was also a great deal of milk-white paint, with some modest touches of gilding here and there. The cabin was pleasantly lit by the long low windows which its roof rose just high enough to lift above the deck, and the fresh air entered with the slanting sun. Made fast to the floor was a heavy table, over which hung from the ceiling a swinging shelf. Around the little saloon ran lockers cushioned with red plush. At either end were four or five narrow doors, which gave into as many tiny state-rooms. The boy came with

Lydia's things, and set them inside one of these doors; and when he came out again the captain pushed it open, and called them in. "Here!" said he. "Here 's where my girls made themselves at home the last voyage, and I expect you 'll find it pretty comfortable. They say you don't feel the motion so much,—*I* don't know anything about the motion,—and in smooth weather you can have that window open sometimes, and change the air. It 's light and it 's large. Well, I had it fitted up for my wife; but she 's got kind of *on* now, you know, and she don't feel much like going any more; and so I always give it to my nicest passenger." This was an unmistakable compliment, and Lydia blushed to the captain's entire content. "That 's a rug she hooked," he continued, touching with his toe the carpet, rich in its artless domestic dyes as some Persian fabric, that lay before the berth. "These gimcracks belong to my girls; they left 'em." He pointed to various slight structures of card-board worked with crewel, which were tacked to the walls. "Pretty snug, eh?"

"Yes," said Lydia, "it 's nicer than I thought it could be, even after what grandfather said."

"Well, that 's right!" exclaimed the captain. "I like your way of speaking up. I wish you could know my girls. How old are you now?"

"I 'm nineteen," said Lydia.

"Why, you 're just between my girls!" cried the captain. "Sally is twenty-one, and Persis is eighteen. Well, now, Miss Blood," he said, as they returned to the cabin, "you can't begin to make yourself at home too soon for me. I used to sail to Cadiz and Malaga a good deal; and when I went to see any of them Spaniards he 'd say, 'This house is yours.' Well, that 's what I say: This ship is yours as long as you stay in her. And I *mean* it, and that 's more than *they* did!" Captain Jenness laughed mightily, took some of Lydia's fingers in his left hand and squeezed them, and clapped her grandfather on the shoulder with his right. Then he slipped his hand down the old man's bony arm to the elbow, and held it, while he dropped his head towards Lydia, and said, "We shall be glad to have him stay to supper, and as much longer as he likes, heh?"

"Oh, no!" said Lydia; "grandfather must go back on the six o'clock train. My aunt expects him." Her voice fell, and her face suddenly clouded.

"Good!" cried the captain. Then he pulled out his watch, and held it as far away as the chain would stretch, frowning at it with his head aslant. "Well!" he burst out. "He hasn't got any too much time on his hands." The old man gave a nervous start, and the girl trembled. "Hold on! Yes; there's time. It's only fifteen minutes after five."

"Oh, but we were more than half an hour getting down here," said Lydia, anxiously. "And grandfather doesn't know the way back. He'll be sure to get lost. I *wish* we'd come in a carriage."

"Couldn't 'a' kept the carriage waitin' on expense, Lyddy," retorted her grandfather. "But I tell you," he added, with something like resolution, "if I could find a carriage anywheres near that wharf, I'd take it, just as *sure!* I wouldn't miss that train for more'n half a dollar. It would cost more than that at a hotel to-night, let alone how your aunt Maria'd feel."

"Why, look here!" said Captain Jenness, naturally appealing to the girl. "Let *me* get your grandfather back. I've got to go up town again, anyway, for some last things, with an express wagon, and we can ride right to the depot in that. Which depot is it?"

"Fitchburg," said the old man eagerly.

"That 's right!" commented the captain. "Get you there in plenty of time, if we don't lose any now. And I 'll tell you what, my little girl," he added, turning to Lydia: "if it 'll be a comfort to you to ride up with us, and see your grandfather off, why come along! *My* girls went with me the last time on an express wagon."

"No," answered Lydia. "I want to. But it wouldn't be any comfort. I thought that out before I left home, and I 'm going to say good-bye to grandfather here."

"First-rate!" said Captain Jenness, bustling towards the gangway so as to leave them alone. A sharp cry from the old man arrested him.

"Lyddy! Where 's your trunks?"

"Why!" said the girl, catching her breath in dismay, "where *can* they be? I forgot all about them."

"I got the checks fast enough," said the old man, "and I shan't give 'em up without I get the trunks. They 'd ought to had 'em down here long ago; and now if I 've got to pester round after 'em I 'm sure to miss the train."

"What shall we do?" asked Lydia.

"Let 's see your checks," said the captain,

with an evident ease of mind that reassured her. When her grandfather had brought them with difficulty from the pocket visited last in the order of his search, and laid them in the captain's waiting palm, the latter endeavoured to get them in focus. "What does it say on 'em?" he asked, handing them to Lydia. "My eyes never *did* amount to anything on shore." She read aloud the name of the express stamped on them. The captain gathered them back into his hand, and slipped them into his pocket, with a nod and wink full of comfort. "I'll see to it," he said. "At any rate, this ship ain't a-going to sail without them, if she waits a week. Now, then, Mr. Latham!"

The old man, who waited, when not directly addressed or concerned, in a sort of blank patience, suddenly started out of his daze, and following the captain too alertly up the gangway stairs drove his hat against the hatch with a force that sent him back into Lydia's arms.

"Oh, grandfather, are you hurt?" she piteously asked, trying to pull up the hat that was jammed down over his forehead.

"Not a bit! But I guess my hat 's about done for,—without I can get it pressed over;

and I d'know as this kind of straw *does* press."

"First-rate!" called the captain from above. "Never mind the hat." But the girl continued fondly trying to re-shape it, while the old man fidgeted anxiously, and protested that he would be sure to be left. It was like a half-shut accordion when she took it from his head; when she put it back it was like an accordion pulled out.

"All ready!" shouted Captain Jenness from the gap in the bulwark, where he stood waiting to descend into the small boat. The old man ran towards him in his senile haste, and stooped to get over the side into the boat below.

"Why, grandfather!" cried the girl in a breaking voice, full of keen, yet tender reproach.

"I declare for 't," he said, scrambling back to the deck. "I 'most forgot. I be'n so put about." He took Lydia's hand loosely into his own, and bent forward to kiss her. She threw her arms round him, and while he remained looking over her shoulder, with a face of grotesque perplexity, and saying, "Don't cry, Lyddy, don't cry!" she pressed her face tighter into his withered neck, and tried to muffle her home-sick sobs. The sym-

pathies as well as the sensibilities often seem dulled by age. They have both perhaps been wrought upon too much in the course of the years, and can no longer respond to the appeal or distress which they can only dimly realise; even the heart grows old. "Don't you, don't you, Lyddy!" repeated the old man. "You musn't. The captain 's waitin'; and the cars—well, every minute I lose makes it riskier and riskier; and your aunt Maria, she 's always so uneasy, you know!"

The girl was not hurt by his anxiety about himself; she was more anxious about him than about anything else. She quickly lifted her head, and drying her eyes, kissed him, forcing her lips into the smile that is more heart-breaking to see than weeping. She looked over the side, as her grandfather was handed carefully down to a seat by the two sailors in the boat, and the captain noted her resolute counterfeit of cheerfulness. "That 's right!" he shouted up to her. "Just like my girls when *their* mother left 'em. But bless you, *they* soon got over it, and so 'll you. Give way, men," he said, in a lower voice, and the boat shot from the ship's side toward the wharf. He turned and waved his handkerchief to Lydia, and stimulated apparently by this, her grandfather felt in

his pockets for his handkerchief; he ended after a vain search by taking off his hat and waving that. When he put it on again, it relapsed into that likeness of a half-shut accordion from which Lydia had rescued it; but she only saw the face under it.

As the boat reached the wharf an express wagon drove down, and Lydia saw the sarcastic parley which she could not hear between the captain and the driver about the belated baggage which the latter put off. Then she saw the captain help her grandfather to the seat between himself and the driver, and the wagon rattled swiftly out of sight. One of the sailors lifted Lydia's baggage over the side of the wharf to the other in the boat, and they pulled off to the ship with it.

III.

LYDIA went back to the cabin, and presently the boy who had taken charge of her lighter luggage came dragging her trunk and bag down the gangway stairs. Neither was very large, and even a boy of fourteen who was small for his age might easily manage them.

"You can stow away what 's in 'em in the drawers," said the boy. "I suppose you didn't notice the drawers," he added, at her look of inquiry. He went into her room, and pushing aside the valance of the lower berth showed four deep drawers below the bed; the charming snugness of the arrangement brought a light of housewifely joy to the girl's face.

"Why, it 's as good as a bureau. They will hold everything."

"Yes," exulted the boy; "they 're for two persons' things. The captain's daughters, they both had this room. Pretty good sized too; a good deal the captain's build.

You won't find a better state-room than this on a steamer. I've been on 'em." The boy climbed up on the edge of the upper drawer, and pulled open the window at the top of the wall. "Give you a little air, I guess. If you want I should, the captain said I was to bear a hand helping you to stow away what was in your trunks."

"No," said Lydia, quickly. "I'd just as soon do it alone."

"All right," said the boy. "If I was you, I'd do it now. I don't know just when the captain means to sail; but after we get outside, it might be rough, and it's better to have everything pretty snug by that time. I'll haul away the trunks when you've got 'em empty. If I shouldn't happen to be here, you can just call me at the top of the gangway, and I'll come. My name's Thomas," he said. He regarded Lydia inquiringly a moment before he added: "If you'd just as lives, I rather you'd call me Thomas, and not *steward*. They said you'd call me steward," he explained, in a blushing, deprecating confidence; "and as long as I've not got my growth, it kind of makes them laugh, you know,—especially the second officer."

"I will call you Thomas," said Lydia.

"Thank you." The boy glanced up at the round clock screwed to the cabin wall. "I guess you won't have to call me anything unless you hurry. I shall be down here, laying the table for supper, before you're done. The captain said I was to lay it for you and him, and if he didn't get back in time you was to go to eating, any way. Guess you won't think Captain Jenness is going to starve anybody."

"Have you been many voyages with Captain Jenness before this?" asked Lydia, as she set open her trunk, and began to lay her dresses out on the locker. Home-sickness, like all grief, attacks in paroxysms. One gust of passionate regret had swept over the girl; before another came, she could occupy herself almost cheerfully with the details of unpacking.

"Only one before," said the boy. "The last one, when his daughters went out. I guess it was their coaxing got mother to let me go. *My* father was killed in the war."

"Was he?" asked Lydia, sympathetically.

"Yes. I didn't know much about it at the time; so little. Both your parents living?"

"No," said Lydia. "They're both dead.

They died a long while ago. I've always lived with my aunt and grandfather."

"I thought there must be something the matter,—your coming with your grandfather," said the boy. "I don't see why you don't let me carry in some of those dresses for you. I'm used to helping about."

"Well, you may," answered Lydia, "if you want." A native tranquil kindness showed itself in her voice and manner, but something of the habitual authority of a school-mistress mingled with it. "You must be careful not to rumple them if I let you."

"I guess not. I've got older sisters at home. They hated to have me leave. But I looked at it this way: If I was ever going to sea—and I *was*—I couldn't get such another captain as Captain Jenness, nor such another crew; all the men from down our way; and *I* don't mind the second mate's jokes much. He don't mean anything by them; likes to plague, that's all. He's a first-rate sailor."

Lydia was kneeling before one of the trunks, and the boy was stooping over it, with a hand on either knee. She had drawn out her only black silk dress, and was finding it rather crumpled. "I shouldn't have

thought it would have got so much jammed, coming fifty miles," she soliloquised. "But they seemed to take a pleasure in seeing how much they could bang the trunks." She rose to her feet and shook out the dress, and drew the skirt several times over her left arm.

The boy's eyes glistened. "Goodness!" he said. "Just new, ain't it? Going to wear it any on board?"

"Sundays, perhaps," answered Lydia thoughtfully, still smoothing and shaping the dress, which she regarded at arm's-length, from time to time, with her head aslant.

"I suppose it 's the latest style?" pursued the boy.

"Yes, it is," said Lydia. "We sent to Boston for the pattern. I hate to pack it into one of those drawers," she mused.

"You needn't," replied Thomas. "There's a whole row of hooks."

"I want to know!" cried Lydia. She followed Thomas into her state-room. "Well, well! They do seem to have thought of everything!"

"I should say so," exulted the boy. "Look here!" He showed her a little niche near the head of the berth strongly framed with

glass, in which a lamp was made fast. "Light up, you know, when you want to read, or feel kind of lonesome." Lydia clasped her hands in pleasure and amaze. "Oh, I tell you Captain Jenness meant to have things about right. The other state-rooms don't begin to come up to this." He dashed out in his zeal, and opened their doors, that she might triumph in the superiority of her accommodations without delay. These rooms were cramped together on one side; Lydia's was in a comparatively ample corner by itself.

She went on unpacking her trunk, and the boy again took his place near her, in the same attitude as before. "I tell you," he said, "I shall like to see you with that silk on. Have you got any other nice ones?"

"No; only this I'm wearing," answered Lydia, half amused and half honest in her sympathy with his ardour about her finery. "They said not to bring many clothes; they would be cheaper over there." She had now reached the bottom of her trunk. She knew by the clock that her grandfather could hardly have left the city on his journey home, but the interval of time since she had parted with him seemed vast. It was as if she had started to Boston in a

former life; the history of the choosing and cutting and making of these clothes was like a dream of pre-existence. She had never had so many things new at once, and it had been a great outlay, but her aunt Maria had made the money go as far as possible, and had spent it with that native taste, that genius for dress, which sometimes strikes the summer boarder in the sempstresses of the New England hills. Miss Latham's gift was quaintly unrelated to herself. In dress, as in person and manner, she was uncompromisingly plain and stiff. All the more lavishly, therefore, had it been devoted to the grace and beauty of her sister's child, who, ever since she came to find a home in her grandfather's house, had been more stylishly dressed than any other girl in the village. The summer boarders, whom the keen eye of Miss Latham studied with unerring sense of the best new effects in costume, wondered at Lydia's elegance, as she sat beside her aunt in the family pew, a triumph of that grim artist's skill. Lydia knew that she was well dressed, but she knew that after all she was only the expression of her aunt's inspirations. Her own gift was of another sort. Her father was a music-teacher, whose failing health

had obliged him to give up his profession, and who had taken the travelling agency of a parlour organ manufactory for the sake of the out-door life. His business had brought him to South Bradfield, where he sold an organ to Deacon Latham's church, and fell in love with his younger daughter. He died a few years after his marriage, of an ancestral consumption, his sole heritage from the good New England stock of which he came. His skill as a pianist, which was considerable, had not descended to his daughter, but her mother had bequeathed her a peculiarly rich and flexible voice, with a joy in singing which was as yet a passion little affected by culture. It was this voice which, when Lydia rose to join in the terrible hymning of the congregation at South Bradfield, took the thoughts of people off her style and beauty; and it was this which enchanted her father's sister when, the summer before the date of which we write, that lady had come to America on a brief visit, and heard Lydia sing at her parlour organ in the old homestead. Mrs. Erwin had lived many years abroad, chiefly in Italy, for the sake of the climate. She was of delicate health, and constantly threatened by the hereditary disease that had left her the last of her

generation, and she had the fastidiousness of an invalid. She was full of generous impulses which she mistook for virtues; but the presence of some object at once charming and worthy was necessary to rouse these impulses. She had been prosperously married when very young, and as a pretty American widow she had wedded in second marriage at Naples one of those Englishmen who have money enough to live at ease in Latin countries; he was very fond of her, and petted her. Having no children she might long before have thought definitely of poor Henry's little girl, as she called Lydia; but she had lived very comfortably indefinite in regard to her ever since the father's death. Now and then she had sent the child a handsome present or a sum of money. She had it on her conscience not to let her be wholly a burden to her grandfather; but often her conscience drowsed. When she came to South Bradfield, she won the hearts of the simple family, which had been rather hardened against her, and she professed an enthusiasm for Lydia. She called her pretty names in Italian, which she did not pronounce well; she babbled a great deal about what ought to be done for her, and went away without doing anything; so that when

a letter finally came, directing Lydia to be sent out to her in Venice, they were all surprised, in the disappointment to which they had resigned themselves.

Mrs. Erwin wrote an epistolary style exasperatingly vacuous and diffuse, and, like many women of that sort, she used pencil instead of ink, always apologising for it as due now to her weak eyes, and now to her weak wrist, and again to her not being able to find the ink. Her hand was full of foolish curves and dashes, and there were no spaces between the words at times. Under these conditions it was no light labour to get at her meaning; but the sum of her letter was that she wished Lydia to come out to her at once, and she suggested that, as they could have few opportunities or none to send her with people going to Europe, they had better let her come the whole way by sea. Mrs. Erwin remembered—in the space of a page and a half—that nothing had ever done *her* so much good as a long sea voyage, and it would be excellent for Lydia, who, though she looked so strong, probably needed all the bracing up she could get. She had made inquiries,—or, what was the same thing, Mr. Erwin had, for her,—and she found that vessels from American ports seldom came to

Venice; but they often came to Trieste, which was only a few hours away; and if Mr. Latham would get Lydia a ship for Trieste at Boston, she could come very safely and comfortably in a few weeks. She gave the name of a Boston house engaged in the Mediterranean trade to which Mr. Latham could apply for passage; if they were not sending any ship themselves, they could probably recommend one to him.

This was what happened when Deacon Latham called at their office a few days after Mrs. Erwin's letter came. They directed him to the firm despatching the Aroostook, and Captain Jenness was at their place when the deacon appeared there. The captain took cordial possession of the old man at once, and carried him down to the wharf to look at the ship and her accommodations. The matter was quickly settled between them. At that time Captain Jenness did not know but he might have other passengers out; at any rate, he would look after the little girl (as Deacon Latham always said in speaking of Lydia) the same as if she were his own child.

Lydia knelt before her trunk, thinking of the remote events, the extinct associations of a few minutes and hours and days ago;

she held some cuffs and collars in her hand, and something that her aunt Maria had said recurred to her. She looked up into the intensely interested face of the boy, and then laughed, bowing her forehead on the back of the hand that held these bits of linen.

The boy blushed. "What are you laughing at?" he asked, half piteously, half indignantly, like a boy used to being badgered.

"Oh, nothing," said Lydia. "My aunt told me if any of these things should happen to want doing up, I had better get the stewardess to help me." She looked at the boy in a dreadfully teasing way, softly biting her lip.

"Oh, if you 're going to begin *that* way!" he cried in affliction.

"I 'm not," she answered, promptly. "I like boys. I 've taught school two winters, and I like boys first-rate."

Thomas was impersonally interested again. "Time! *You* taught school?"

"Why not?"

"You look pretty young for a school teacher!"

"Now you 're making fun of *me*," said Lydia, astutely.

The boy thought he must have been, and

was consoled. "Well, you began it," he said.

"I oughtn't to have done so," she replied with humility; "and I won't any more. There!" she said, "I 'm not going to open my bag now. You can take away the trunk when you want, Thomas."

"Yes, ma'am," said the boy. The idea of a school-mistress was perhaps beginning to awe him a little. "Put your bag in your state-room first." He did this, and when he came back from carrying away her trunk he began to set the table. It was a pretty table, when set, and made the little cabin much cosier. When the boy brought the dishes from the cook's galley, it was a barbarously abundant table. There was cold boiled ham, ham and eggs, fried fish, baked potatoes, buttered toast, tea, cake, pickles, and water-melon; nothing was wanting. "I tell you," said Thomas, noticing Lydia's admiration, "the captain lives well lay-days."

"Lay-days?" echoed Lydia.

"The days we 're in port," the boy explained.

"Well, I should think as much!" She ate with the hunger that tranquillity bestows upon youth after the swift succession of strange events, and the conflict of many

emotions. The captain had not returned in time, and she ate alone.

After a while she ventured to the top of the gangway stairs, and stood there, looking at the novel sights of the harbour, in the red sunset light, which rose slowly from the hulls and lower spars of the shipping, and kindled the tips of the high-shooting masts with a quickly fading splendour. A delicate flush responded in the east, and rose to meet the denser crimson of the west; a few clouds, incomparably light and diaphanous, bathed themselves in the glow. It was a summer sunset, portending for the land a morrow of great heat. But cool airs crept along the water, and the ferry-boats, thrust shuttle-wise back and forth between either shore, made a refreshing sound as they crushed a broad course to foam with their paddles. People were pulling about in small boats; from some the gay cries and laughter of young girls struck sharply along the tide. The noise of the quiescent city came off in a sort of dull moan. The lamps began to twinkle in the windows and the streets on shore; the lanterns of the ships at anchor in the stream showed redder and redder as the twilight fell. The home-sickness began to mount from Lydia's heart in a choking lump

to her throat; for one must be very happy to endure the sights and sounds of the summer evening anywhere. She had to shield her eyes from the brilliancy of the kerosene when she went below into the cabin.

IV.

LYDIA did not know when the captain came on board. Once, talking in the cabin made itself felt through her dreams, but the dense sleep of weary youth closed over her again, and she did not fairly wake till morning. Then she thought she heard the crowing of a cock and the cackle of hens, and fancied herself in her room at home; the illusion passed with a pang. The ship was moving, with a tug at her side, the violent respirations of which were mingled with the sound of the swift rush of the vessel through the water, the noise of feet on the deck, and of orders hoarsely shouted.

The girl came out into the cabin, where Thomas was already busy with the breakfast table, and climbed to the deck. It was four o'clock of the summer's morning; the sun had not yet reddened the east, but the stars were extinct, or glimmered faint points immeasurably withdrawn in the vast grey of the sky. At that hour there is a hovering

dimness over all, but the light on things near at hand is wonderfully keen and clear, and the air has an intense yet delicate freshness that seems to breathe from the remotest spaces of the universe,—a waft from distances beyond the sun. On the land the leaves and grass are soaked with dew; the densely interwoven songs of the birds are like a fabric that you might see and touch. But here, save for the immediate noises on the ship, which had already left her anchorage far behind, the shouting of the tug's escape-pipes, and the huge, swirling gushes from her powerful wheel, a sort of spectacular silence prevailed, and the sounds were like a part of this silence. Here and there a small fishing schooner came lagging slowly in, as if belated, with scarce wind enough to fill her sails; now and then they met a steamboat, towering white and high, a many-latticed bulk, with no one to be seen on board but the pilot at his wheel, and a few sleepy passengers on the forward promenade. The city, so beautiful and stately from the bay, was dropping, and sinking away behind. They passed green islands, some of which were fortified: the black guns looked out over the neatly shaven glacis; the sentinel paced the rampart.

"Well, well!" shouted Captain Jenness, catching sight of Lydia where she lingered at the cabin door. "You *are* an early bird. Glad to see you up! Hope you rested well! Saw your grandfather off all right, and kept him from taking the wrong train with my own hand. He 's terribly excitable. Well, I suppose I shall be just so, at his age. Here!" The captain caught up a stool and set it near the bulwark for her. "There! You make yourself comfortable wherever you like. You 're at home, you know." He was off again in a moment. Lydia cast her eye over at the tug. On the deck, near the pilot-house, stood the young man who had stopped the afternoon before while she sat at the warehouse door and asked her grandfather if she were not ill. At his feet was a substantial valise, and over his arm hung a shawl. He was smoking, and seated near him, on another valise, was his companion of the day before, also smoking. In the instant that Lydia caught sight of them, she perceived that they both recognised her and exchanged, as it were, a start of surprise. But they remained as before, except that he who was seated drew out a fresh cigarette, and without looking up reached to the other for a light. They were both men of good

height, and they looked fresh and strong, with something very alert in their slight movements,—sudden turns of the head and brisk nods, which were not nervously quick. Lydia wondered at their presence there in an ignorance which could not even conjecture. She knew too little to know that they could not have any destination on the tug, and that they would not be making a pleasure-excursion at that hour in the morning. Their having their valises with them deepened the mystery, which was not solved till the tug's engines fell silent, and at an unnoticed order a space in the bulwark not far from Lydia was opened and steps were let down the side of the ship. Then the young men, who had remained, to all appearance, perfectly unconcerned, caught up their valises and climbed to the deck of the Aroostook. They did not give her more than a glance out of the corners of their eyes, but the surprise of their coming on board was so great a shock that she did not observe that the tug, casting loose from the ship, was describing a curt and foamy semicircle for her return to the city, and that the Aroostook, with a cloud of snowy canvas filling overhead, was moving over the level sea with the light ease of a bird

that half swims, half flies, along the water. A sudden dismay, which was somehow not fear so much as an overpowering sense of isolation, fell upon the girl. She caught at Thomas, going forward with some dishes in his hand, with a pathetic appeal.

"Where are you going, Thomas?"

"I'm going to the cook's galley to help dish up the breakfast."

"What's the cook's galley?"

"Don't you know? The kitchen."

"Let me go with you. I should like to see the kitchen." She trembled with eagerness. Arrived at the door of the narrow passage that ran across the deck aft of the forecastle, she looked in and saw, amid a haze of frying and broiling, the short, stocky figure of a negro, bow-legged, and unnaturally erect from the waist up. At sight of Lydia, he made a respectful duck forward with his uncouth body. "Why, are you the cook?" she almost screamed in response to this obeisance.

"Yes, miss," said the man, humbly, with a turn of the pleading black eyes of the negro.

Lydia grew more peremptory: "Why—why—I thought the cook was a woman!"

"Very sorry, miss," began the negro,

with a deprecatory smile, in a slow, mild voice.

Thomas burst into a boy's yelling laugh: "Well, if that ain't the best joke on Gabriel! He 'll never hear the last of it when I tell it to the second officer!"

"Thomas!" cried Lydia, terribly, "you shall *not!*" She stamped her foot. "Do you hear me?"

The boy checked his laugh abruptly. "Yes, ma'am," he said submissively.

"Well, then!" returned Lydia. She stalked proudly back to the cabin gangway, and descending shut herself into her state-room.

V.

A FEW hours later Deacon Latham came into the house with a milk-pan full of pease. He set this down on one end of the kitchen table, with his straw hat beside it, and then took a chair at the other end and fell into the attitude of the day before, when he sat in the parlour with Lydia and Miss Maria waiting for the stage; his mouth was puckered to a whistle, and his fingers were held above the board in act to drub it. Miss Maria turned the pease out on the table, and took the pan into her lap. She shelled at the pease in silence, till the sound of their pelting, as they were dropped on the tin, was lost in their multitude; then she said, with a sharp, querulous, pathetic impatience, "Well, father, I suppose you 're thinkin' about Lyddy."

"Yes, Maria, I be," returned her father, with uncommon plumpness, as if here now were something he had made up his mind

to stand to. "I been thinkin' that Lyddy 's a woman grown, as you may say."

"Yes," admitted Miss Maria, "she 's a woman as far forth as that goes. What put it into your head?"

"Well, I d' know as I know. But it 's just like this: I got to thinkin' whether she mightn't get to feelin' rather lonely on the voyage, without any other woman to talk to."

"I guess," said Miss Maria, tranquilly, "she 's goin' to feel lonely enough at times, anyway, poor thing! But I told her if she wanted advice or help about anything just to go to the stewardess. That Mrs. Bland that spent the summer at the Parkers' last year was always tellin' how they went to the stewardess for 'most everything, and she give her five dollars in gold when they got into Boston. I shouldn't want Lyddy should give so much as that, but I should want she should give something, as long 's it 's the custom."

"They don't have 'em on sailin' vessels, Captain Jenness said; "they only have 'em on steamers," said Deacon Latham.

"Have what?" asked Miss Maria, sharply.

"Stewardesses. They 've got a cabin-boy."

Miss Maria desisted a moment from her work; then she answered, with a gruff shortness peculiar to her, "Well, then, she can go to the cook, I suppose. It wouldn't matter which she went to, I presume."

Deacon Latham looked up with the air of confessing to sin before the whole congregation. "The cook 's a man,—a black man," he said.

Miss Maria dropped a handful of pods into the pan, and sent a handful of peas rattling across the table on to the floor. "Well, who in Time"—the expression was strong, but she used it without hesitation, and was never known to repent it—"*will* she go to, then?"

"I declare for 't," said her father, "I don't know. I d' know as I ever thought it out fairly before; but just now when I was pickin' the pease for you, my mind got to dwellin' on Lyddy, and then it come to me all at once: there she was, the only *one* among a whole shipful, and I—I didn't know but what she might think it rather of a strange position for her."

"*Oh!*" exclaimed Miss Maria, petulantly. "I guess Lyddy 'd know how to conduct herself wherever she was; she 's a born lady, if ever there was one. But what I

think is "—Miss Maria paused, and did not say what she thought; but it was evidently not the social aspect of the matter which was uppermost in her mind. In fact, she had never been at all afraid of men, whom she regarded as a more inefficient and feebler-minded kind of women.

"The only thing 't makes me feel easier is what the captain said about the young men," said Deacon Latham.

"What young men?" asked Miss Maria.

"Why, I told you about 'em!" retorted the old man, with some exasperation.

"You told me about two young men that stopped on the wharf and pitied Lyddy's worn-out looks."

"Didn't I tell you the rest? I declare for 't, I don't believe I did; I be'n so put about. Well, as we was drivin' up to the depot, we met the same two young men, and the captain asked 'em, 'Are you goin' or not a-goin'?'—just that way; and they said, 'We're goin'.' And he said, 'When you comin' aboard?' and he told 'em he was goin' to haul out this mornin' at three o'clock. And they asked what tug, and he told 'em, and they fixed it up between 'em all then that they was to come aboard from the tug, when she 'd got the ship outside;

and that 's what I suppose they did. The captain he said to me he hadn't mentioned it before, because he wa'n't sure 't they 'd go till that minute. He gave 'em a first-rate of a character."

Miss Maria said nothing for a long while. The subject seemed one with which she did not feel herself able to grapple. She looked all about the kitchen for inspiration, and even cast a searching glance into the wood-shed. Suddenly she jumped from her chair, and ran to the open window: "Mr. Goodlow! Mr. Goodlow! I wish you 'd come in here a minute."

She hurried to meet the minister at the front door, her father lagging after her with the infantile walk of an old man.

Mr. Goodlow took off his straw hat as he mounted the stone step to the threshold, and said good-morning; they did not shake hands. He wore a black alpaca coat, and waistcoat of farmer's satin; his hat was dark straw, like Deacon Latham's, but it was low-crowned, and a line of ornamental open-work ran round it near the top.

"Come into the settin'-room," said Miss Maria. "It 's cooler in there." She lost no time in laying the case before the minister. She ended by saying, "Father, he don't feel

just right about it, and I d' know as I 'm quite clear in my own mind."

The minister considered a while in silence before he said, "I think Lydia's influence upon those around her will be beneficial, whatever her situation in life may be."

"There, father!" cried Miss Maria, in reproachful relief.

"You 're right, Maria, you 're right!" assented the old man, and they both waited for the minister to continue.

"I rejoiced with you," he said, "when this opportunity for Lydia's improvement offered, and I am not disposed to feel anxious as to the ways and means. Lydia is no fool. I have observed in her a dignity, a sort of authority, very remarkable in one of her years."

"I guess the boys at the school down to the Mill Village found out she had authority enough," said Miss Maria, promptly materialising the idea.

"Precisely," said Mr. Goodlow.

"That 's what I told father, in the first place," said Miss Maria. "I guess Lyddy 'd know how to conduct herself wherever she was,—just the words I used."

"I don't deny it, Maria, I don't deny it," shrilly piped the old man. "I ain't

afraid of any harm comin' to Lyddy any more 'n what you be. But what I said was, Wouldn't she feel kind of strange, sort of lost, as you may say, among so many, and she the only *one?*"

"She will know how to adapt herself to circumstances," said Mr. Goodlow. "I was conversing last summer with that Mrs. Bland who boarded at Mr. Parker's, and she told me that girls in Europe are brought up with no habits of self-reliance whatever, and that young ladies are never seen on the streets alone in France and Italy."

"Don't you think," asked Miss Maria, hesitating to accept this ridiculous statement, "that Mrs. Bland exaggerated some?"

"She *talked* a great deal," admitted Mr. Goodlow. "I should be sorry if Lydia ever lost anything of that native confidence of hers in her own judgment, and her ability to take care of herself under any circumstances, and I do not think she will. She never seemed conceited to me, but she *was* the most self-reliant girl I ever saw."

"You 've hit it there, Mr. Goodlow. Such a spirit as she always had!" sighed Miss Maria. "It was just so from the first. It used to go to my heart to see that little thing lookin' after herself, every way, and not

askin' anybody's help, but just as quiet and proud about it! She's her mother, all over. And yest'day, when she set here waitin' for the stage, and it did seem as if I should have to give up, hearin' her sob, sob, sob,—why, Mr. Goodlow, she hadn't any more idea of backin' out than—than"— Miss Maria relinquished the search for a comparison, and went into another room for a handkerchief. "I don't believe she cared over and above about goin' from the start," said Miss Maria, returning, "but when once she'd made up her mind to it, there she was. I d' know as she *took* much of a fancy to her aunt, but you couldn't told from anything that Lyddy said. Now, if I have anything on my mind, I have to blat it right out, as you may say; I can't seem to bear it a minute; but Lyddy's different. Well," concluded Miss Maria, "I guess there ain't goin' to any harm come to her. But it did give me a kind of start, first off, when father up and got to feelin' sort of bad about it. I d' know as I should thought much about it, if he hadn't seemed to. I d' know as I should ever thought about anything except her not havin' any one to advise with about her clothes. It's the only thing she ain't handy with: she won't know what to wear. I'm afraid she'll spoil her silk. I

d' know but what father 's *been* hasty in not lookin' into things carefuller first. He most always does repent afterwards."

"Couldn't repent beforehand!" retorted Deacon Latham. "And I tell you, Maria, I never saw a much finer man than Captain Jenness; and the cabin 's everything I said it was, and more. Lyddy reg'larly went off over it; 'n' I guess, as Mr. Goodlow says, she 'll influence 'em for good. Don't you fret about her clothes any. You fitted her out in apple-pie order, and she 'll soon be there. 'Tain't but a little ways to Try-East, any way, to what it is some of them India voyages, Captain Jenness said. He had his own daughters out the last voyage; 'n' I guess he can tell Lyddy when it 's weather to wear her silk. I d' know as I 'd better said anything about what I was thinkin'. I don't want to be noways rash, and yet I thought I couldn't be too partic'lar."

For a silent moment Miss Maria looked sourly uncertain as to the usefulness of scruples that came so long after the fact. Then she said abruptly to Mr. Goodlow, "Was it you or Mr. Baldwin preached Mirandy Holcomb's fune'l sermon?"

VI.

ONE of the advantages of the negative part assigned to women in life is that they are seldom forced to commit themselves. They can, if they choose, remain perfectly passive while a great many things take place in regard to them; they need not account for what they do not do. From time to time a man must show his hand, but save for one supreme exigency a woman need never show hers. She moves in mystery as long as she likes; and mere reticence in her, if she is young and fair, interprets itself as good sense and good taste.

Lydia was, by convention as well as by instinct, mistress of the situation when she came out to breakfast, and confronted the young men again with collected nerves, and a reserve which was perhaps a little too proud. The captain was there to introduce them, and presented first Mr. Dunham, the gentleman who had spoken to her grandfather on the wharf, and then Mr. Stani-

ford, his friend and senior by some four or five years. They were both of the fair New England complexion; but Dunham's eyes were blue, and Staniford's dark grey. Their moustaches were blonde, but Dunham's curled jauntily outward at the corners, and his light hair waved over either temple from the parting in the middle. Staniford's moustache was cut short; his hair was clipped tight to his shapely head, and not parted at all; he had a slightly aquiline nose, with sensitive nostrils, showing the cartilage; his face was darkly freckled. They were both handsome fellows, and fittingly dressed in rough blue, which they wore like men with the habit of good clothes; they made Lydia such bows as she had never seen before. Then the captain introduced Mr. Watterson, the first officer, to all, and sat down, saying to Thomas, with a sort of guilty and embarrassed growl, "Ain't he out yet? Well, we won't wait," and with but little change of tone asked a blessing; for Captain Jenness in his way was a religious man.

There was a sixth plate laid, but the captain made no further mention of the person who was not out yet till shortly after the coffee was poured, when the absentee

appeared, hastily closing his state-room door behind him, and then waiting on foot, with a half-impudent, half-intimidated air, while Captain Jenness, with a sort of elaborate repressiveness, presented him as Mr. Hicks. He was a short and slight young man, with a small sandy moustache curling tightly in over his lip, floating reddish-blue eyes, and a deep dimple in his weak, slightly retreating chin. He had an air at once amiable and baddish, with an expression, curiously blended, of monkey-like humour and spaniel-like apprehensiveness. He did not look well, and till he had swallowed two cups of coffee his hand shook. The captain watched him furtively from under his bushy eyebrows, and was evidently troubled and preoccupied, addressing a word now and then to Mr. Watterson, who, by virtue of what was apparently the ship's discipline, spoke only when he was spoken to, and then answered with prompt acquiescence. Dunham and Staniford exchanged not so much a glance as a consciousness in regard to him, which seemed to recognise and class him. They talked to each other, and sometimes to the captain. Once they spoke to Lydia. Mr. Dunham, for example, said, "Miss—ah—Blood, don't you think we are uncommonly

fortunate in having such lovely weather for a start-off?"

"I don't know," said Lydia.

Mr. Dunham arrested himself in the use of his fork. "I beg your pardon?" he smiled.

It seemed to be a question, and after a moment's doubt Lydia answered, "I didn't know it was strange to have fine weather at the start."

"Oh, but I can assure you it is," said Dunham, with a certain lady-like sweetness of manner which he had. "According to precedent, we ought to be all deathly sea-sick."

"Not at *this* time of year," said Captain Jenness.

"Not at this time of *year*," repeated Mr. Watterson, as if the remark were an order to the crew.

Dunham referred the matter with a look to his friend, who refused to take part in it, and then he let it drop. But presently Staniford himself attempted the civility of some conversation with Lydia. He asked her gravely, and somewhat severely, if she had suffered much from the heat of the day before.

"Yes," said Lydia, "it was very hot."

"I'm told it was the hottest day of the summer, so far," continued Staniford, with the same severity.

"I want to know!" cried Lydia.

The young man did not say anything more.

As Dunham lit his cigar at Staniford's on deck, the former said significantly, "What a very American thing!"

"What a bore!" answered the other.

Dunham had never been abroad, as one might imagine from his calling Lydia's presence a very American thing, but he had always consorted with people who had lived in Europe; he read the *Revue des Deux Mondes* habitually, and the London weekly newspapers, and this gave him the foreign stand-point from which he was fond of viewing his native world. "It's incredible," he added. "Who in the world can she be?"

"Oh, *I* don't know," returned Staniford, with a cold disgust. "I should object to the society of such a young person for a month or six weeks under the most favourable circumstances, and with frequent respites; but to be imprisoned on the same ship with her, and to have her on one's mind and in one's way the whole time, is more than I bargained for. Captain Jenness should have told us; though I suppose he

thought that if *she* could stand it, *we* might. There's that point of view. But it takes all ease and comfort out of the prospect. Here comes that blackguard." Staniford turned his back towards Mr. Hicks, who was approaching, but Dunham could not quite do this, though he waited for the other to speak first.

"Will you—would you oblige me with a light?" Mr. Hicks asked, taking a cigar from his case.

"Certainly," said Dunham, with the comradery of the smoker.

Mr. Hicks seemed to gather courage from his cigar. "You didn't expect to find a lady passenger on board, did you?" His poor disagreeable little face was lit up with unpleasant enjoyment of the anomaly. Dunham hesitated for an answer.

"One never can know what one's fellow-passengers are going to be," said Staniford, turning about, and looking not at Mr. Hicks's face, but his feet, with an effect of being, upon the whole, disappointed not to find them cloven. He added, to put the man down rather than from an exact belief in his own suggestion, "She's probably some relation of the captain's."

"Why, that's the joke of it," said

Hicks, fluttered with his superior knowledge. "I've been pumping the cabin-boy, and he says the captain never saw her till yesterday. She's an up-country schoolmarm, and she came down here with her grandfather yesterday. She's going out to meet friends of hers in Venice." The little man pulled at his cigar, and coughed and chuckled, and waited confidently for the impression.

"Dunham," said Staniford, "did I hand you that sketch-block of mine to put in your bag, when we were packing last night?"

"Yes, I've got it."

"I'm glad of that. Did you see Murray yesterday?"

"No; he was at Cambridge."

"I thought he was to have met you at Parker's." The conversation no longer included Mr. Hicks or the subject he had introduced; after a moment's hesitation, he walked away to another part of the ship. As soon as he was beyond ear-shot, Staniford again spoke: "Dunham, this girl is plainly one of those cases of supernatural innocence, on the part of herself and her friends, which, as you suggested, wouldn't occur among any other people in the world but ours."

"You 're a good fellow, Staniford!" cried Dunham.

"Not at all. I call myself simply a human being, with the elemental instincts of a gentleman, as far as concerns this matter. The girl has been placed in a position which could be made very painful to her. It seems to me it 's our part to prevent it from being so. I doubt if she finds it at all anomalous, and if we choose she need never do so till after we 've parted with her. I fancy we can preserve her unconsciousness intact."

"Staniford, this is like you," said his friend, with glistening eyes. "I had some wild notion of the kind myself, but I 'm so glad you spoke of it first."

"Well, never mind," responded Staniford. "We must make her feel that there is nothing irregular or uncommon in her being here as she is. I don't know how the matter 's to be managed, exactly; it must be a negative benevolence for the most part; but it can be done. The first thing is to cow that nuisance yonder. Pumping the cabin-boy! The little sot! Look here, Dunham; it 's such a satisfaction to me to think of putting that fellow under foot that I 'll leave you all the credit of saving

the young lady's feelings. I should like to begin stamping on him at once."

"I think you have made a beginning already. I confess I wish you hadn't such heavy nails in your boots!"

"Oh, they'll do him good, confound him!" said Staniford.

"I should have liked it better if her name hadn't been Blood," remarked Dunham, presently.

"It doesn't matter what a girl's surname is. Besides, Blood is very frequent in some parts of the State."

"She's very pretty, isn't she?" Dunham suggested.

"Oh pretty enough, yes," replied Staniford. "Nothing is so common as the pretty girl of our nation. Her beauty is part of the general tiresomeness of the whole situation."

"Don't you think," ventured his friend, further, "that she has rather a lady-like air?"

"She wanted to know," said Staniford, with a laugh.

Dunham was silent a while before he asked, "What do you suppose her first name is?"

"Jerusha, probably."

"Oh, impossible!"

"Well, then,—Lurella. You have no idea

of the grotesqueness of these people's minds. I used to see a great deal of their intimate life when I went on my tramps, and chanced it among them, for bed and board, wherever I happened to be. We cultivated Yankees and the raw material seem hardly of the same race. Where the Puritanism has gone out of the people in spots, there 's the rankest growth of all sorts of crazy heresies, and the old scriptural nomenclature has given place to something compounded of the fancifulness of story-paper romance and the gibberish of spiritualism. They make up their names, sometimes, and call a child by what sounds pretty to them. I wonder how the captain picked up that scoundrel."

The turn of Staniford's thought to Hicks was suggested by the appearance of Captain Jenness, who now issued from the cabin gangway, and came toward them with the shadow of unwonted trouble in his face. The captain, too, was smoking.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, with the obvious indirectness of a man not used to diplomacy, "how do you like your accommodations?"

Staniford silently acquiesced in Dunham's reply that they found them excellent. "But you don't mean to say," Dunham added,

"that you 're going to give us beefsteak and all the vegetables of the season the whole way over?"

"No," said the captain; "we shall put you on sea-fare soon enough. But you 'll like it. You don't want the same things at sea that you do on shore; your appetite chops round into a different quarter altogether, and you want salt beef; but you 'll get it good. Your room 's pretty snug," he suggested.

"Oh, it 's big enough," said Staniford, to whom he had turned as perhaps more in authority than Dunham. "While we 're well we only sleep in it, and if we 're sea-sick it doesn't matter where we are."

The captain knocked the ash from his cigar with the tip of his fat little finger, and looked down. "I was in hopes I could have let you had a room apiece, but I had another passenger jumped on me at the last minute. I suppose you see what 's the matter with Mr. Hicks?" He looked up from one to another, and they replied with a glance of perfect intelligence. "I don't generally talk my passengers over with one another, but I thought I 'd better speak to you about him. I found him yesterday evening at my agents', with his father. He 's just been on a spree, a regular two weeks' tear, and the

old gentleman didn't know what to do with him, on shore, any longer. He thought he 'd send him to sea a voyage, and see what would come of it, and he pleaded hard with me to take him. I didn't want to take him, but he worked away at me till I couldn't say no. I argued in my own mind that he couldn't get anything to drink on my ship, and that he'd behave himself well enough as long as he was sober." The captain added ruefully, "He looks worse this morning than he did last night. He looks bad. I told the old gentleman that if he got into any trouble at Try-East, or any of the ports where we touched, he shouldn't set foot on my ship again. But I guess he 'll keep pretty straight. He hasn't got any money, for one thing."

Staniford laughed. "He stops drinking for obvious reasons, if for no others, like Artemus Ward's destitute inebriate. Did you think only of us in deciding whether you should take him?"

The captain looked up quickly at the young men, as if touched in a sore place. "Well, there again I didn't seem to get my bearings just right. I suppose you mean the young lady?" Staniford motionlessly and silently assented. "Well, she 's more

of a young lady than I thought she was, when her grandfather first come down here and talked of sending her over with me. He was always speaking about his little girl, you know, and I got the idea that she was about thirteen, or eleven, may be. I thought the child might be some bother on the voyage, but thinks I, I'm used to children, and I guess I can manage. Bless your soul! when I first see her on the wharf yesterday, it 'most knocked me down! I never believed she was half so tall, nor half so good-looking." Staniford smiled at this expression of the captain's despair, but the captain did not smile. "Why, she was as pretty as a bird! Well, there I was. It was no time then to back out. The old man wouldn't understood. Besides, there was the young lady herself, and she seemed so forlorn and helpless that I kind of pitied her. I thought, What if it was one of my own girls? And I made up my mind that she shouldn't know from anything I said or did that she wasn't just as much at home and just as much in place on my ship as she would be in my house. I suppose what made me feel easier about it, and took the queerness off some, was my having my own girls along last voyage. To be sure it ain't quite

the same thing," said the captain, interrogatively.

"Not quite," assented Staniford.

"If there was two of them," said the captain, "I don't suppose I should feel so bad about it. But thinks I, A lady 's a lady the world over, and a gentleman 's a gentleman." The captain looked significantly at the young men. "As for that other fellow," added Captain Jenness, "if I can't take care of him, I think I 'd better stop going to sea altogether, and go into the coasting trade."

He resumed his cigar with defiance, and was about turning away when Staniford spoke. "Captain Jenness, my friend and I had been talking this little matter over just before you came up. Will you let me say that I 'm rather proud of having reasoned in much the same direction as yourself?"

This was spoken with that air which gave Staniford a peculiar distinction, and made him the despair and adoration of his friend: it endowed the subject with seriousness, and conveyed a sentiment of grave and noble sincerity. The captain held out a hand to each of the young men, crossing his wrists in what seemed a favourite fashion with him. "Good!" he cried, heartily, "I *thought* I knew you."

VII.

STANIFORD and Dunham drew stools to the rail, and sat down with their cigars after the captain left them. The second mate passed by, and cast a friendly glance at them; he had whimsical brown eyes that twinkled under his cap-peak, while a lurking smile played under his heavy moustache; but he did not speak. Staniford said, there was a pleasant fellow, and he should like to sketch him. He was only an amateur artist, and he had been only an amateur in life otherwise, so far; but he did not pretend to have been anything else.

"Then you 're not sorry you came, Staniford?" asked Dunham, putting his hand on his friend's knee. He characteristically assumed the responsibility, although the voyage by sailing-vessel rather than steamer was their common whim, and it had been Staniford's preference that decided them for Trieste rather than any nearer port.

"No, I 'm not sorry,—if you call it come, already. I think a bit of Europe will be a very good thing for the present, or as long as I 'm in this irresolute mood. If I understand it, Europe is the place for American irresolution. When I 've made up my mind, I 'll come home again. I still think Colorado is the thing, though I haven't abandoned California altogether; it 's a question of cattle-range and sheep-ranch."

"You 'll decide against both," said Dunham.

"How would you like West Virginia? They cattle-range in West Virginia, too. They may sheep-ranch, too, for all I know, —no, that 's in Old Virginia. The trouble is that the Virginias, otherwise irreproachable, are not paying fields for such enterprises. They say that one is a sure thing in California, and the other is a sure thing in Colorado. They give you the figures." Staniford lit another cigar.

"But why shouldn't you stay where you are, Staniford? You 've money enough left, after all."

"Yes, money enough for one. But there 's something ignoble in living on a small stated income, unless you have some object in view besides living, and I haven't, you know.

It's a duty I owe to the general frame of things to make more money."

"If you turned your mind to any one thing, I'm sure you'd succeed where you are," Dunham urged.

"That's just the trouble," retorted his friend. "I can't turn my mind to any one thing,—I'm too universally gifted. I paint a little, I model a little, I play a very little indeed; I can write a book notice. The ladies praise my art, and the editors keep my literature a long time before they print it. This doesn't seem the highest aim of being. I have the noble earth-hunger; I must get upon the land. That's why I've got upon the water." Staniford laughed again, and pulled comfortably at his cigar. "Now, you," he added, after a pause, in which Dunham did not reply, "you have not had losses; you still have everything comfortable about you. *Du hast Alles was Menschen begehr*, even to the *schönsten Augen* of the divine Miss Hibbard."

"Yes, Staniford, that's it. I hate your going out there all alone. Now, if you were taking some nice girl with you!" Dunham said, with a lover's fond desire that his friend should be in love, too.

"To those wilds? To a redwood shanty

in California, or a turf hovel in Colorado? What nice girl would go? 'I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.'"

"I don't like to have you take any risks of degenerating," began Dunham.

"With what you know to be my natural tendencies? Your prophetic eye prefigures my pantaloons in the tops of my boots. Well, there is time yet to turn back from the brutality of a patriarchal life. You must allow that I've taken the longest way round in going West. In Italy there are many chances; and besides, you know, I like to talk."

It seemed to be an old subject between them, and they discussed it languidly, like some abstract topic rather than a reality.

"If you only had some tie to bind you to the East, I should feel pretty safe about you," said Dunham, presently.

"I have you," answered his friend, demurely.

"Oh, I'm nothing," said Dunham, with sincerity.

"Well, I may form some tie in Italy. Art may fall in love with me, there. How would you like to have me settle in Florence, and set up a studio instead of a ranch,—

choose between sculpture and painting, instead of cattle and sheep? After all, it does grind me to have lost that money! If I had only been swindled out of it, I shouldn't have cared; but when you go and make a bad thing of it yourself, with your eyes open, there's a reluctance to place the responsibility where it belongs that doesn't occur in the other case. Dunham, do you think it altogether ridiculous that I should feel there was something sacred in the money? When I remember how hard my poor old father worked to get it together, it seems wicked that I should have stupidly wasted it on the venture I did. I want to get it back; I want to make money. And so I 'm going out to Italy with you, to waste more. I don't respect myself as I should if I were on a Pullman palace car, speeding westward. I 'll own I like this better."

"Oh, it 's all right, Staniford," said his friend. "The voyage will do you good, and you 'll have time to think everything over, and start fairer when you get back."

"That girl," observed Staniford with characteristic abruptness, "is a type that is commoner than we imagine in New England. We fair people fancy we are the only genuine Yankees. I guess that 's a mistake.

There must have been a good many dark Puritans. In fact, we always think of Puritans as dark, don't we?"

"I believe we do," assented Dunham. "Perhaps on account of their black clothes."

"Perhaps," said Staniford. "At any rate I'm so tired of the blonde type in fiction that I rather like the other thing in life. Every novelist runs a blonde heroine; I wonder why. This girl has the clear Southern pallor; she's of the olive hue; and her eyes are black as sloes,—not that I know what sloes are. Did she remind you of anything in particular?"

"Yes; a little of Faed's Evangeline, as she sat in the door-way of the warehouse yesterday."

"Exactly. I wish the picture were more of a picture; but I don't know that it matters. *She's* more of a picture."

"'Pretty as a bird,' the captain said."

"Bird isn't bad. But the bird is in her manner. There's something tranquilly alert in her manner that's like a bird; like a bird that lingers on its perch, looking at you over its shoulder, if you come up behind. That trick of the heavily lifted, half lifted eyelids,—I wonder if it's a trick. The long lashes can't be; she can't make them curl

up at the edges. Blood,—Lurella Blood. And she wants to know." Staniford's voice fell thoughtful. "She 's more slender than Faed's Evangeline. Faed painted rather too fat a sufferer on that tombstone. Lurella Blood has a very pretty figure. Lurella. Why Lurella?"

"Oh, come Staniford!" cried Dunham. "It isn't fair to call the girl by that jingle without some ground for it."

"I 'm sure her name 's Lurella, for she wanted to know. Besides, there 's as much sense in it as there is in any name. It sounds very well. Lurella. It is mere prejudice that condemns the novel collocation of syllables."

"I wonder what she 's thinking of now,—what 's passing in her mind," mused Dunham aloud.

"*You* want to know, too, do you?" mocked his friend. "I 'll tell you what: processions of young men so long that they are an hour getting by a given point. That 's what 's passing in every girl's mind—when she 's thinking. It 's perfectly right. Processions of young girls are similarly passing in our stately and spacious intellects. It 's the chief business of the youth of one sex to think of the youth of the other sex."

"Oh, yes, I know," assented Dunham; "and I believe in it, too"—

"Of course you do, you wicked wretch, you abandoned Lovelace, you bruiser of ladies' hearts! You hope the procession is composed entirely of yourself. What would the divine Hibbard say to your goings-on?"

"Oh, don't, Staniford! It isn't fair," pleaded Dunham, with the flattered laugh which the best of men give when falsely attainted of gallantry. "I was wondering whether she was feeling home-sick, or strange, or"—

"I will go below and ask her," said Staniford. "I know she will tell me the exact truth. They always do. Or if you will take a guess of mine instead of her word for it, I will hazard the surmise that she is not at all home-sick. What has a pretty young girl to regret in such a life as she has left? It's the most arid and joyless existence under the sun. She has never known any thing like society. In the country with us, the social side must always have been somewhat paralysed, but there are monumental evidences of pleasures in other days that are quite extinct now. You see big dusty ball-rooms in the old taverns; ball-rooms that

have had no dancing in them for half a century, and where they give you a bed sometimes. There used to be academies, too, in the hill towns, where they furnished a rude but serviceable article of real learning, and where the local octogenarian remembers seeing something famous in the way of theatricals on examination-day; but neither his children nor his grandchildren have seen the like. There 's a decay of the religious sentiment, and the church is no longer a social centre, with merry meetings among the tombstones between the morning and the afternoon service. Superficial humanitarianism of one kind or another has killed the good old orthodoxy, as the railroads have killed the turnpikes and the country taverns; and the common schools have killed the academies. Why, I don't suppose this girl ever saw anything livelier than a township cattle-show, or a Sunday-school picnic, in her life. They don't pay visits in the country except at rare intervals, and their evening parties, when they have any, are something to strike you dead with pity. They used to clear away the corn-husks and pumpkins on the barn floor, and dance by the light of tin lanterns. At least, that's the traditional thing. The actual thing is

sitting around four sides of the room, giggling, whispering, looking at photograph albums, and coaxing somebody to play on the piano. The banquet is passed in the form of apples and water. I have assisted at *some* rural festivals where the apples were omitted. Upon the whole, I wonder our country people don't all go mad. They do go mad, a great many of them, and manage to get a little glimpse of society in the insane asylums." Staniford ended his tirade with a laugh, in which he vented his humorous sense and his fundamental pity of the conditions he had caricatured.

"But how," demanded Dunham, breaking rebelliously from the silence in which he had listened, "do you account for her good manner?"

"She probably was born with a genius for it. Some people are born with a genius for one thing, and some with a genius for another. I, for example, am an artistic genius, forced to be an amateur by the delusive possession of early wealth, and now burning with a creative instinct in the direction of the sheep or cattle business; you have the gift of universal optimism; Lurella Blood has the genius of good society. Give that girl a winter among nice people in

Boston, and you would never know that she was not born on Beacon Hill."

"Oh, I doubt that," said Dunham.

"You doubt it? Pessimist!"

"But you implied just now that she had no sensibility," pursued Dunham.

"So I did!" cried Staniford, cheerfully. "Social genius and sensibility are two very different things; the cynic might contend they were incompatible, but I won't insist so far. I dare say she may regret the natal spot; most of us have a dumb, brutish attachment to the *cari luoghi;* but if she knows anything, she hates its surroundings, and must be glad to get out into the world. I should like mightily to know how the world strikes her, as far as she's gone. But I doubt if she's one to betray her own counsel in any way. She looks deep, Lurella does." Staniford laughed again at the pain which his insistence upon the name brought into Dunham's face.

VIII.

AFTER dinner, nature avenged herself in the young men for their vigils of the night before, when they had stayed up so late, parting with friends, that they had found themselves early risers without having been abed. They both slept so long that Dunham, leaving Staniford to a still unfinished nap, came on deck between five and six o'clock.

Lydia was there, wrapped against the freshening breeze in a red knit shawl, and seated on a stool in the waist of the ship, in the Evangeline attitude, and with the wistful, Evangeline look in her face, as she gazed out over the far-weltering sea-line, from which all trace of the shore had vanished. She seemed to the young man very interesting, and he approached her with that kindness for all other women in his heart which the lover feels in absence from his beloved, and with a formless sense that some retribution was due her from him for the roughness with which Staniford had surmised her

natural history. Women had always been dear and sacred to him; he liked, beyond most young men, to be with them; he was for ever calling upon them, getting introduced to them, waiting upon them, inventing little services for them, corresponding with them, and wearing himself out in their interest. It is said that women do not value men of this sort so much as men of some other sorts. It was long, at any rate, before Dunham—whom people always called Charley Dunham—found the woman who thought him more lovely than every other woman pronounced him; and naturally Miss Hibbard was the most exacting of her sex. She required all those offices which Dunham delighted to render, and many besides: being an invalid, she needed devotion. She had refused Dunham before going out to Europe with her mother, and she had written to take him back after she got there. He was now on his way to join her in Dresden, where he hoped that he might marry her, and be perfectly sacrificed to her ailments. She only lacked poverty in order to be thoroughly displeasing to most men; but Dunham had no misgiving save in regard to her money; he wished she had no money.

"A good deal more motion, isn't there?"

he said to Lydia, smiling sunnily as he spoke, and holding his hat with one hand. "Do you find it unpleasant?"

"No," she answered, "not at all. I like it."

"Oh, there isn't enough swell to make it uncomfortable, yet," asserted Dunham, looking about to see if there were not something he could do for her. "And you may turn out a good sailor. Were you ever at sea before?"

"No; this is the first time I was ever on a ship."

"Is it possible!" cried Dunham; he was now fairly at sea for the first time himself, though by virtue of his European associations he seemed to have made many voyages. It appeared to him that if there was nothing else he could do for Lydia, it was his duty to talk to her. He found another stool, and drew it up within easier conversational distance. "Then you 've never been out of sight of land before?"

"No," said Lydia.

"That 's very curious—I beg your pardon; I mean you must find it a great novelty."

"Yes, it 's very strange," said the girl seriously. "It looks like the Flood. It seems as if all the rest of the world was drowned."

Dunham glanced round the vast horizon. "It *is* like the Flood. And it has that quality, which I 've often noticed in sublime things, of seeming to be for this occasion only."

"Yes?" said Lydia.

"Why don't you know? It seems as if it must be like a fine sunset, and would pass in a few minutes. Perhaps we feel that we can't endure sublimity long, and want it to pass."

"I could look at it for ever," replied Lydia.

Dunham turned to see if this were young-ladyish rapture, but perceived that she was affecting nothing. He liked seriousness, for he was, with a great deal of affectation for social purposes, a very sincere person. His heart warmed more and more to the lonely girl; to be talking to her seemed, after all, to be doing very little for her, and he longed to be of service. "Have you explored our little wooden world, yet?" he asked, after a pause.

Lydia paused too. "The ship?" she asked presently. "No; I've only been in the cabin, and here; and this morning," she added, conscientiously, "Thomas showed me the cook's galley,—the kitchen."

"You 've seen more than I have," said Dunham. "Wouldn't you like to go forward, to the bow, and see how it looks there?"

"Yes, thank you," answered Lydia, "I would."

She tottered a little in gaining her feet, and the wind drifted her slightness a step or two aside. "Won't you take my arm, perhaps?" suggested Dunham.

"Thank you," said Lydia, "I think I can get along." But after a few paces, a lurch of the ship flung her against Dunham's side; he caught her hand, and passed it through his arm without protest from her.

"Isn't it grand?" he asked triumphantly, as they stood at the prow, and rose and sank with the vessel's careering plunges. It was no gale, but only a fair wind; the water foamed along the ship's sides, and, as her bows descended, shot forward in hissing jets of spray; away on every hand flocked the white caps. "You had better keep my arm, here." Lydia did so, resting her disengaged hand on the bulwarks, as she bent over a little on that side to watch the rush of the sea. "It really seems as if there were more of a view here."

"It does, somehow," admitted Lydia.

"Look back at the ship's sails," said Dunham. The swell and press of the white canvas seemed like the clouds of heaven swooping down upon them from all the airy heights. The sweet wind beat in their faces, and they laughed in sympathy, as they fronted it. "Perhaps the motion is a little too strong for you here?" he asked.

"Oh, not at all!" cried the girl.

He had done something for her by bringing her here, and he hoped to do something more by taking her away. He was discomfited, for he was at a loss what other attention to offer. Just at that moment a sound made itself heard above the whistling of the cordage and the wash of the sea, which caused Lydia to start and look round.

"Didn't you think," she asked, "that you heard hens?"

"Why, yes," said Dunham. "What could it have been? Let us investigate."

He led the way back past the forecastle and the cook's galley, and there, in dangerous proximity to the pots and frying pans, they found a coop with some dozen querulous and meditative fowl in it.

"I heard them this morning," said Lydia. "They seemed to wake me with their crowing, and I thought—I was at home!"

"I'm very sorry," said Dunham, sympathetically. He wished Staniford were there to take shame to himself for denying sensibility to this girl.

The cook, smoking a pipe at the door of his galley, said, "Dey won't trouble you much, miss. Dey don't gen'ly last us long, and I'll kill de roosters first."

"Oh, come, now!" protested Dunham. "I wouldn't say that!" The cook and Lydia stared at him in equal surprise.

"Well," answered the cook, "I'll kill the hens first, den. It don't make any difference to me which I kill. I dunno but de hens is tenderer." He smoked in a bland indifference.

"Oh, hold on!" exclaimed Dunham, in repetition of his helpless protest.

Lydia stooped down to make closer acquaintance with the devoted birds. They huddled themselves away from her in one corner of their prison, and talked together in low tones of grave mistrust. "Poor things!" she said. As a country girl, used to the practical ends of poultry, she knew as well as the cook that it was the fit and simple destiny of chickens to be eaten, sooner or later; and it must have been less in commiseration of their fate than in self-

pity and regret for the scenes they recalled that she sighed. The hens that burrowed yesterday under the lilacs in the door-yard; the cock that her aunt so often drove, insulted and exclamatory, at the head of his harem, out of forbidden garden bounds; the social groups, that scratched and descanted lazily about the wide, sunny barn-doors; the anxious companies seeking their favourite perches, with alarming outcries, in the dusk of summer evenings; the sentinels answering each other from farm to farm before winter dawns, when all the hills were drowned in snow, were of kindred with these hapless prisoners.

Dunham was touched at Lydia's compassion. "Would you like—would you like to feed them?" he asked by a happy inspiration. He turned to the cook, with his gentle politeness: "There 's no objection to our feeding them, I suppose?"

"Laws, no!" said the cook. "Fats 'em up." He went inside, and reappeared with a pan full of scraps of meat and crusts of bread.

"Oh, I say!" cried Dunham. "Haven't you got some grain, you know, of some sort; some seeds, don't you know?"

"They will like this," said Lydia, while

the cook stared in perplexity. She took the pan, and opening the little door of the coop flung the provision inside. But the fowls were either too depressed in spirit to eat anything, or they were not hungry; they remained in their corner, and merely fell silent, as if a new suspicion had been roused in their unhappy breasts.

"Dey 'll come to it," observed the cook.

Dunham felt far from content, and regarded the poultry with silent disappointment. "Are you fond of pets?" he asked, after a while.

"Yes, I used to have pet chickens when I was a little thing."

"You ought to adopt one of these," suggested Dunham. "That white one is a pretty creature."

"Yes," said Lydia. "He looks as if he were Leghorn. Leghorn breed," she added, in reply to Dunham's look of inquiry. "He's a beauty."

"Let me get him out for you a moment!" cried the young man, in his amiable zeal. Before Lydia could protest, or the cook interfere, he had opened the coop-door and plunged his arm into the tumult which his manœuvre created within. He secured the cockerel, and drawing it forth was about to

offer it to Lydia, when in its struggles to escape it drove one of its spurs into his hand. Dunham suddenly released it; and then ensued a wild chase for its recapture, up and down the ship, in which it had every advantage of the young man. At last it sprang upon the rail; he put out his hand to seize it, when it rose with a desperate screech, and flew far out over the sea. They watched the suicide till it sank exhausted into a distant white-cap.

"Dat's gone," said the cook, philosophically. Dunham looked round. Half the ship's company, alarmed by his steeple-chase over the deck, were there, silently agrin.

Lydia did not laugh. When he asked, still with his habitual sweetness, but entirely at random, "Shall we—ah—go below?" she did not answer definitely, and did not go. At the same time she ceased to be so timidly intangible and aloof in manner. She began to talk to Dunham, instead of letting him talk to her; she asked him questions, and listened with deference to what he said on such matters as the probable length of the voyage and the sort of weather they were likely to have. She did not take note of his keeping his handkerchief wound round his hand, nor of his attempts to recur to the

subject of his mortifying adventure. When they were again quite alone, the cook's respect having been won back through his ethnic susceptibility to silver, she remembered that she must go to her room.

"In other words," said Staniford, after Dunham had reported the whole case to him, "she treated your hurt vanity as if you had been her pet school-boy. She lured you away from yourself, and got you to talking and thinking of other things. Lurella is deep, I tell you. What consummate tacticians the least of women are! It 's a pity that they have to work so often in such dull material as men; they ought always to have women to operate on. The youngest of them has more wisdom in human nature than the sages of our sex. I must say, Lurella is magnanimous, too. She might have taken her revenge on you for pitying her yesterday when she sat in that warehouse door on the wharf. It was rather fine in Lurella not to do it. What did she say, Dunham? What did she talk about? Did she want to know?"

"No!" shouted Dunham. "She talked very well, like any young lady."

"Oh, all young ladies talk well, of course. But what did this one say? What did she

do, except suffer a visible pang of home-sickness at the sight of unattainable poultry? Come, you have represented the interview with Miss Blood as one of great brilliancy."

"I haven't," said Dunham. "I have done nothing of the kind. Her talk was like any pleasant talk; it was refined and simple, and—unobtrusive."

"That is, it was in no way remarkable," observed Staniford, with a laugh. "I expected something better of Lurella; I expected something salient. Well, never mind. She's behaved well by you, seeing what a goose you had made of yourself. She behaved like a lady, and I've noticed that she eats with her fork. It often happens in the country that you find the women practising some of the arts of civilisation, while their men folk are still sunk in barbaric uses. Lurella, I see, is a social creature; she was born for society, as you were, and I suppose you will be thrown a good deal together. We're all likely to be associated rather familiarly, under the circumstances. But I wish you would note down in your mind some points of her conversation. I'm really curious to know what a girl of her traditions thinks about the

world when she first sees it. Her mind must be in most respects an unbroken wilderness. She 's had schooling, of course, and she knows her grammar and algebra; but she can't have had any cultivation. If she were of an earlier generation, one would expect to find something biblical in her; but you can't count upon a Puritanic culture now among our country folks."

"If you are so curious," said Dunham, "why don't you study her mind yourself?"

"No, no, that wouldn't do," Staniford answered. "The light of your innocence upon hers is invaluable. I can understand her better through you. You must go on. I will undertake to make your peace with Miss Hibbard."

The young men talked as they walked the deck and smoked in the starlight. They were wakeful after their long nap in the afternoon, and they walked and talked late, with the silences that old friends can permit themselves. Staniford recurred to his loss of money and his Western projects, which took more definite form now that he had placed so much distance between himself and their fulfilment. With half a year in Italy before him, he decided upon a cattle-range in Colorado. Then, "I should like

to know," he said, after one of the pauses, "how two young men of our form strike that girl's fancy. I haven't any personal curiosity about her impressions, but I should like to know, as an observer of the human race. If my conjectures are right, she's never met people of our sort before."

"What sort of men has she been associated with?" asked Dunham.

"Well, I'm not quite prepared to say. I take it that it isn't exactly the hobbledehoy sort. She has probably looked high,—as far up as the clerk in the store. He has taken her to drive in a buggy Saturday afternoons, when he put on his ready-made suit,—and looked very well in it, too; and they've been at picnics together. Or may be, as she's in the school-teaching line, she's taken some high-browed, hollow-cheeked high-school principal for her ideal. Or it is possible that she has never had attention from any one. That is apt to happen to self-respectful girls in rural communities, and their beauty doesn't save them. Fellows, as they call themselves, like girls that have what they call go, that make up to them. Lurella doesn't seem of that kind; and I should not be surprised if you were the first gentleman who had ever offered her his arm. I wonder

what she thought of you. She 's acquainted by sight with the ordinary summer boarder of North America; they penetrate everywhere, now; but I doubt if she 's talked with them much, if at all. She must be ignorant of our world beyond anything we can imagine."

"But how do you account for her being so well dressed?"

"Oh, that 's instinct. You find it everywhere. In every little village there is some girl who knows how to out-preen all the others. I wonder," added Staniford, in a more deeply musing tone, "if she kept from laughing at you out of good feeling, or if she was merely overawed by your splendour."

"She didn't laugh," Dunham answered, "because she saw that it would have added to my annoyance. My splendour had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, don't underrate your splendour, my dear fellow!" cried Staniford, with a caressing ridicule that he often used with Dunham. "Of course, *I* know what a simple and humble fellow you are; but you 've no idea how that exterior of yours might impose upon the agricultural imagination; it has its effect upon me, in my pastoral

moods." Dunham made a gesture of protest, and Staniford went on: "Country people have queer ideas of us, sometimes. Possibly Lurella was afraid of you. Think of that, Dunham,—having a woman afraid of you, for once in your life! Well, hurry up your acquaintance with her, Dunham, or I shall wear myself out in mere speculative analysis. I haven't the *aplomb* for studying the sensibilities of a young lady, and catching chickens for her, so as to produce a novel play of emotions. I thought this voyage was going to be a season of mental quiet, but having a young lady on board seems to forbid that kind of repose. I shouldn't mind a half dozen, but *one* is altogether too many. Poor little thing! I say, Dunham! There 's something rather pretty about having her with us, after all, isn't there? It gives a certain distinction to our voyage. We shall not degenerate. We shall shave every day, wind and weather permitting, and wear our best things." They talked of other matters, and again Staniford recurred to Lydia: "If she has any regrets for her mountain home, —though I don't see why she should have, —I hope they haven't kept her awake. My far-away cot on the plains is not going to interfere with my slumbers."

Staniford stepped to the ship's side, and flung the end of his cigarette overboard; it struck a red spark amidst the lurid phosphorescence of the bubbles that swept backward from the vessel's prow.

IX.

THE weather held fine. The sun shone, and the friendly winds blew out of a cloudless heaven; by night the moon ruled a firmament powdered with stars of multitudinous splendour. The conditions inspired Dunham with a restless fertility of invention in Lydia's behalf. He had heard of the game of shuffle-board, that blind and dumb croquet, with which the jaded passengers on the steamers appease their terrible leisure, and with the help of the ship's carpenter he organised this pastime, and played it with her hour after hour, while Staniford looked on and smoked in grave observance, and Hicks lurked at a distance, till Dunham felt it on his kind heart and tender conscience to invite him to a share in the diversion. As his nerves recovered their tone, Hicks showed himself a man of some qualities that Staniford would have liked in another man: he was amiable, and he was droll, though apt to turn sulky if Staniford addressed

him, which did not often happen. He knew more than Dunham of shuffle-board, as well as of tossing rings of rope over a peg set up a certain space off in the deck,—a game which they eagerly took up in the afternoon, after pushing about the flat wooden disks all the morning. Most of the talk at the table was of the varying fortunes of the players; and the yarn of the story-teller in the forecastle remained half-spun, while the sailors off watch gathered to look on, and to bet upon Lydia's skill. It puzzled Staniford to make out whether she felt any strangeness in the situation, which she accepted with so much apparent serenity. Sometimes, in his frequently recurring talks with Dunham, he questioned whether their delicate precautions for saving her feelings were not perhaps thrown away upon a young person who played shuffle-board and ring-toss on the deck of the Aroostook with as much self-possession as she would have played croquet on her native turf at South Bradfield.

"Their ideal of propriety up country is very different from ours," he said, beginning one of his long comments. "I don't say that it concerns the conscience more than ours does; but they think evil of different things. We're getting Europeanised,—I

don't mean you, Dunham; in spite of your endeavours you will always remain one of the most hopelessly American of our species,—and we have our little borrowed anxieties about the free association of young people. They have none whatever; though they are apt to look suspiciously upon married people's friendships with other people's wives and husbands. It's quite likely that Lurella, with the traditions of her queer world, has not imagined anything anomalous in her position. She may realise certain inconveniences. But she must see great advantages in it. Poor girl! How she must be rioting on the united devotion of cabin and forecastle, after the scanty gallantries of a hill town peopled by elderly unmarried women! I'm glad of it, for her sake. I wonder which she really prizes most; your ornate attentions, or the uncouth homage of those sailors, who are always running to fetch her rings and blocks when she makes a wild shot. I believe I don't care and shouldn't disapprove of her preference, whichever it was." Staniford frowned before he added: "But I object to Hicks and his drolleries. It's impossible for that little wretch to think reverently of a young girl; it's shocking to see her

treating him as if he were a gentleman." Hicks's behaviour really gave no grounds for reproach; and it was only his moral mechanism, as Staniford called the character he constructed for him, which he could blame; nevertheless, the thought of him gave an oblique cast to Staniford's reflections, which he cut short by saying, "This sort of worship is every woman's due in girlhood; but I suppose a fortnight of it will make her a pert and silly coquette. What does she say to your literature, Dunham?"

Dunham had already begun to lend Lydia books,—his own and Staniford's,—in which he read aloud to her, and chose passages for her admiration; but he was obliged to report that she had rather a passive taste in literature. She seemed to like what he said was good, but not to like it very much, or to care greatly for reading; or else she had never had the habit of talking books. He suggested this to Staniford, who at once philosophised it.

"Why, I rather like that, you know. We all read in such a literary way, now; we don't read simply for the joy or profit of it; we expect to talk about it, and say how it is this and that; and I've no doubt

that we 're sub-consciously harassed, all the time, with an automatic process of criticism. Now Lurella, I fancy, reads with the sense of the days when people read in private, and not in public, as we do. She believes that your serious books are all true; and she knows that my novels are all lies—that 's what some excellent Christians would call the fiction even of George Eliot or of Hawthorne; she would be ashamed to discuss the lives and loves of heroes and heroines who never existed. I think that 's first-rate. She must wonder at your distempered interest in them. If one could get at it, I suppose the fresh wholesomeness of Lurella's mind would be something delicious,—a quality like spring water."

He was one of those men who cannot rest in regard to people they meet till they have made some effort to formulate them. He liked to ticket them off; but when he could not classify them, he remained content with his mere study of them. His habit was one that does not promote sympathy with one's fellow-creatures. He confessed even that it disposed him to wish for their less acquaintance when once he had got them generalised; they became then collected specimens. Yet, for the time being, his curiosity in them

gave him a specious air of sociability. He lamented the insincerity which this involved, but he could not help it. The next novelty in character was as irresistible as the last; he sat down before it till it yielded its meaning; or suggested to him some analogy by which he could interpret it.

With this passion for the arrangement and distribution of his neighbours, it was not long before he had placed most of the people on board in what he called the psychology of the ship. He did not care that they should fit exactly in their order. He rather preferred that they should have idiosyncrasies which differentiated them from their species, and he enjoyed Lydia's being a little indifferent about books for this and for other reasons. "If she were literary, she would be like those vulgar little persons of genius in the magazine stories. She would have read all sorts of impossible things up in her village. She would have been discovered by some æsthetic summer boarder, who had happened to identify her with the gifted Daisy Dawn, and she would be going out on the æsthetic's money for the further expansion of her spirit in Europe. Somebody would be obliged to fall in love with her, and she would sacrifice her career

for a man who was her inferior, as we should be subtly given to understand at the close. I think it's going to be as distinguished by and by not to like books as it is not to write them. Lurella is a prophetic soul; and if there's anything comforting about her, it's her being so merely and stupidly pretty."

"She is not merely and stupidly pretty!" retorted Dunham. "She never does herself justice when you are by. She can talk very well, and on some subjects she thinks strongly."

"Oh, I'm sorry for that!" said Staniford. "But call me some time when she's doing herself justice."

"I don't mean that she's like the women we know. She doesn't say witty things, and she hasn't their responsive quickness; but her ideas are her own, no matter how old they are; and what she says she seems to be saying for the first time, and as if it had never been thought out before."

"That is what I have been contending for," said Staniford; "that is what I meant by spring water. It is that thrilling freshness which charms me in Lurella." He laughed. "Have you converted her to your spectacular faith, yet?" Dunham blushed. "You

have tried," continued Staniford. "Tell me about it!"

"I will not talk with you on such matters," said Dunham, "till you know how to treat serious things seriously."

"I shall know how when I realise that they are serious with you. Well, I don't object to a woman's thinking strongly on religious subjects; it 's the only safe ground for her strong thinking, and even there she had better feel strongly. Did you succeed in convincing her that Archbishop Laud was a *saint incompris*, and the good King Charles a blessed martyr?"

Dunham did not answer till he had choked down some natural resentment. He had, several years earlier, forsaken the pale Unitarian worship of his family, because, Staniford always said, he had such a feeling for colour, and had adopted an extreme tint of ritualism. It was rumoured at one time, before his engagement to Miss Hibbard, that he was going to unite with a celibate brotherhood; he went regularly into retreat at certain seasons, to the vast entertainment of his friend; and, within the bounds of good taste, he was a zealous propagandist of his faith, of which he had the practical virtues in high degree. "I hope," he said

presently, "that I know how to respect convictions, even of those adhering to the Church in Error."

Staniford laughed again. "I see you have not converted Lurella. Well, I like that in her, too. I wish I could have the arguments, *pro* and *con*. It would have been amusing. I suppose," he pondered aloud, "that she is a Calvinist of the deepest dye, and would regard me as a lost spirit for being outside of her church. She would look down upon me from one height, as I look down upon her from another. And really, as far as personal satisfaction in superiority goes, she might have the advantage of me. That 's very curious, very interesting."

As the first week wore away, the wonted incidents of a sea voyage lent their variety to the life on board. One day the ship ran into a school of whales, which remained heavily thumping and lolling about in her course, and blowing jets of water into the air, like so many breaks in garden hose, Staniford suggested. At another time some flying-fish came on board. The sailors caught a dolphin, and they promised a shark, by and by. All these things were turned to account for the young girl's amuse-

ment, as if they had happened for her. The dolphin died that she might wonder and pity his beautiful death; the cook fried her some of the flying-fish; some one was on the look-out to detect even porpoises for her. A sail in the offing won the discoverer envy when he pointed it out to her; a steamer, celebrity. The captain ran a point out of his course to speak to a vessel, that she might be able to tell what speaking a ship at sea was like.

At table the stores which the young men had laid in for private use became common luxuries, and she fared sumptuously every day upon dainties which she supposed were supplied by the ship,—delicate jellies and canned meats and syruped fruits; and, if she wondered at anything she must have wondered at the scrupulous abstinence with which Captain Jenness, seconded by Mr. Watterson, refused the luxuries which his bounty provided them, and at the constancy with which Staniford declined some of these dishes, and Hicks declined others. Shortly after the latter began more distinctly to be tolerated, he appeared one day on deck with a steamer-chair in his hand, and offered it to Lydia's use, where she sat on a stool by the bulwark. After that, as she reclined in

this chair, wrapped in her red shawl, and provided with a book or some sort of becoming handiwork, she was even more picturesquely than before the centre about which the ship's pride and chivalrous sentiment revolved. They were Americans, and they knew how to worship a woman.

Staniford did not seek occasions to please and amuse her, as the others did. When they met, as they must, three times a day, at table, he took his part in the talk, and now and then addressed her a perfunctory civility. He imagined that she disliked him, and he interested himself in imagining the ignorant grounds of her dislike. "A woman," he said, "must always dislike some one in company; it 's usually another woman; as there 's none on board, I accept her enmity with meekness." Dunham wished to persuade him that he was mistaken. "Don't try to comfort me, Dunham," he replied. "I find a pleasure in being detested which is inconceivable to your amiable bosom."

Dunham turned to go below, from where they stood at the head of the cabin stairs. Staniford looked round, and saw Lydia, whom they had kept from coming up; she must have heard him. He took his cigar

from his mouth, and caught up a stool, which he placed near the ship's side, where Lydia usually sat, and without waiting for her concurrence got a stool for himself, and sat down with her.

"Well, Miss Blood," he said, "it's Saturday afternoon at last, and we're at the end of our first week. Has it seemed very long to you?"

Lydia's colour was bright with consciousness, but the glance she gave Staniford showed him looking tranquilly and honestly at her. "Yes," she said, "it *has* seemed long."

"That's merely the strangeness of everything. There's nothing like local familiarity to make the time pass,—except monotony; and one gets both at sea. Next week will go faster than this, and we shall all be at Trieste before we know it. Of course we shall have a storm or two, and that will retard us in fact as well as fancy. But you wouldn't feel that you'd been at sea if you hadn't had a storm."

He knew that his tone was patronising, but he had theorised the girl so much with a certain slight in his mind that he was not able at once to get the tone which he usually took towards women. This might not, in-

deed, have pleased some women any better than patronage: it mocked while it caressed all their little pretences and artificialities; he addressed them as if they must be in the joke of themselves, and did not expect to be taken seriously. At the same time he liked them greatly, and would not on any account have had the silliest of them different from what she was. He did not seek them as Dunham did; their society was not a matter of life or death with him; but he had an elder-brotherly kindness for the whole sex.

Lydia waited a while for him to say something more, but he added nothing, and she observed, with a furtive look: "I presume you've seen some very severe storms at sea?"

"No," Staniford answered, "I haven't. I've been over several times, but I've never seen anything alarming. I've experienced the ordinary sea-sickening tempestuousness."

"Have you—have you ever been in Italy?" asked Lydia, after another pause.

"Yes," he said, "twice; I'm very fond of Italy." He spoke of it in a familiar tone that might well have been discouraging to one of her total unacquaintance with it. Presently he added of his own motion, looking at her with his interest in her as a curi-

ous study, "You 're going to Venice, I think Mr. Dunham told me."

"Yes," said Lydia.

"Well, I think it 's rather a pity that you shouldn't arrive there directly, without the interposition of Trieste." He scanned her yet more closely, but with a sort of absence in his look, as if he addressed some ideal of her.

"Why?" asked Lydia, apparently pushed to some self-assertion by this way of being looked and talked at.

"It 's the strangest place in the world," said Staniford; and then he mused again. "But I suppose"—He did not go on, and the word fell again to Lydia.

"I 'm going to visit my aunt, who is staying there. She was where I live, last summer, and she told us about it. But I couldn't seem to understand it."

"No one can understand it, without seeing it."

"I 've read some descriptions of it," Lydia ventured.

"They 're of no use,—the books."

"Is Trieste a strange place, too "

"It 's strange, as a hundred other places are,—and it 's picturesque; but there 's only one Venice."

"I'm afraid sometimes," she faltered, as if his manner in regard to this peculiar place had been hopelessly exclusive, "that it will be almost too strange."

"Oh, that's another matter," said Staniford. "I confess I should be rather curious to know whether you liked Venice. I like it, but I can imagine myself sympathising with people who detested it,—if they said so. Let me see what will give you some idea of it. Do you know Boston well?"

"No; I've only been there twice," Lydia acknowledged.

"Then you've never seen the Back Bay by night, from the Long Bridge. Well, let me see"—

"I'm afraid," interposed Lydia, "that I've not been about enough for you to give me an idea from other places. We always go to Greenfield to do our trading; and I've been to Keene and Springfield a good many times."

"I'm sorry to say I haven't," said Staniford. "But I'll tell you: Venice looks like an inundated town. If you could imagine those sunset clouds yonder turned marble, you would have Venice as she is at sunset. You must first think of the sea when you try to realise the place. If you don't find

the sea too strange, you won't find Venice so."

"I wish it would ever seem half as home-like!" cried the girl.

"Then you find the ship—I'm glad you find the ship—home-like," said Staniford, tentatively.

"Oh, yes; everything is so convenient and pleasant. It seems sometimes as if I had always lived here."

"Well, that's very nice," assented Staniford, rather blankly. "Some people feel a little queer at sea—in the beginning. And you haven't—at all?" He could not help this leading question, yet he knew its meanness, and felt remorse for it.

"Oh, *I* did, at first," responded the girl, but went no further; and Staniford was glad of it. After all, why should he care to know what was in her mind?

"Captain Jenness," he merely said, "understands making people at home."

"Oh, yes, indeed," assented Lydia. "And Mr. Watterson is very agreeable, and Mr. Mason. I didn't suppose sailors were so. What soft, mild voices they have!"

"That's the speech of most of the Down East coast people."

"Is it? I like it better than our voices.

Our voices are so sharp and high, at home."

"It's hard to believe that," said Staniford, with a smile.

Lydia looked at him. "Oh, I wasn't born in South Bradfield. I was ten years old when I went there to live."

"Where *were* you born, Miss Blood?" he asked.

"In California. My father had gone out for his health, but he died there."

"Oh!" said Staniford. He had a book in his hand, and he began to scribble a little sketch of Lydia's pose, on a fly-leaf. She looked round and saw it. "You've detected me," he said; "I haven't any right to keep your likeness, now. I must make you a present of this work of art, Miss Blood." He finished the sketch with some ironical flourishes, and made as if to tear out the leaf.

"Oh!" cried Lydia, simply, "you will spoil the book!"

"Then the book shall go with the picture, if you'll let it," said Staniford.

"Do you mean to give it to me?" she asked, with surprise.

"That was my munificent intention. I want to write your name in it. What's the initial of your first name, Miss Blood?"

"L, thank you," said Lydia.

Staniford gave a start. "No!" he exclaimed. It seemed a fatality.

"My name is Lydia," persisted the girl. "What letter should it begin with?"

"Oh—oh, I knew Lydia began with an L," stammered Staniford, "but I—I—I thought your first name was"—

"What?" asked Lydia sharply.

"I don't know. Lily," he answered guiltily.

"Lily *Blood!*" cried the girl. "Lydia is bad enough; but *Lily* Blood! They couldn't have been such fools!"

"I beg your pardon. Of course not. I don't know how I could have got the idea. It was one of those impressions—hallucinations"—Staniford found himself in an attitude of lying excuse towards the simple girl, over whom he had been lording it in satirical fancy ever since he had seen her, and meekly anxious that she should not be vexed with him. He began to laugh at his predicament, and she smiled at his mistake. "What is the date?" he asked.

"The 15th," she said; and he wrote under the sketch, *Lydia Blood. Ship Aroostook, August* 15, 1874, and handed it to her, with a bow surcharged with gravity.

She took it, and regarded the picture without comment.

"Ah!" said Staniford, "I see that you know how bad my sketch is. You sketch?"

"No, I don't know how to draw," replied Lydia.

"You criticise."

"No."

"So glad," said Staniford. He began to like this. A young man must find pleasure in sitting alone near a pretty young girl, and talking with her about herself and himself, no matter how plain and dull her speech is; and Staniford, though he found Lydia as blankly unresponsive as might be to the flattering irony of his habit, amused himself in realising that here suddenly he was almost upon the terms of window-seat flirtation with a girl whom lately he had treated with perfect indifference, and just now with fatherly patronage. The situation had something more even than the usual window-seat advantages; it had qualities as of a common shipwreck, of their being cast away on a desolate island together. He felt more than ever that he must protect this helpless loveliness, since it had begun to please his imagination. "You don't criticise," he said. "Is that because you are

so amiable? I'm sure you could, if you would."

"No," returned Lydia; "I don't really know. But I've often wished I did know."

"Then you didn't teach drawing in your school?"

"How did you know I had a school?" asked Lydia quickly.

He disliked to confess his authority, because he disliked the authority, but he said, "Mr. Hicks told us."

"Mr. Hicks!" Lydia gave a little frown as of instinctive displeasure, which gratified Staniford.

"Yes; the cabin-boy told him. You see, we are dreadful gossips on the Aroostook,—though there are so few ladies"— It had slipped from him, but it seemed to have no personal slant for Lydia.

"Oh, yes; I told Thomas," she said. "No; it's only a country school. Once I thought I should go down to the State Normal School, and study drawing there; but I never did. Are you—are you a painter, Mr. Staniford?"

He could not recollect that she had pronounced his name before; he thought it came very winningly from her lips. "No, I'm not a painter. I'm not anything." He hesitated; then he added recklessly, "I'm a farmer."

"A farmer?" Lydia looked incredulous, but grave.

"Yes; I'm a horny-handed son of the soil. I'm a cattle-farmer; I'm a sheep-farmer; I don't know which. One day I'm the one, and the next day I'm the other." Lydia looked mystified, and Staniford continued: "I mean that I have no profession, and that sometimes I think of going into farming, out West."

"Yes?" said Lydia.

"How should I like it? Give me an opinion, Miss Blood."

"Oh, I don't know," answered the girl.

"You would never have dreamt that I was a farmer, would you?"

"No, I shouldn't," said Lydia, honestly. "It's very hard work."

"And I don't look fond of hard work?"

"I didn't say that."

"And I've no right to press you for your meaning."

"What I meant was—I mean—Perhaps if you had never tried it you didn't know what very hard work it was. Some of the summer boarders used to think our farmers had easy times."

"I never was a summer boarder of that description. I know that farming is hard

work, and I 'm going into it because I dislike it. What do you think of that as a form of self-sacrifice?"

"I don't see why any one should sacrifice himself uselessly."

"You don't? You have very little conception of martyrdom. Do you like teaching school?"

"No," said Lydia promptly.

"Why do you teach, then?" Staniford had blundered. He knew why she taught, and he felt instantly that he had hurt her pride, more sensitive than that of a more sophisticated person, who would have had no scruple in saying that she did it because she was poor. He tried to retrieve himself. "Of course, I understand that school-teaching is useful self-sacrifice." He trembled lest she should invent some pretext for leaving him; he could not afford to be left at a disadvantage. "But do you know, I would no more have taken you for a teacher than you me for a farmer."

"Yes?" said Lydia.

He could not tell whether she was appeased or not, and he rather feared not. "You don't ask why. And I asked you why at once."

Lydia laughed. "Well, why?"

"Oh, that 's a secret. I 'll tell you one of these days." He had really no reason; he said this to gain time. He was always honest in his talk with men, but not always with women.

"I suppose I look very young," said Lydia. "I used to be afraid of the big boys."

"If the boys were big enough," interposed Staniford, "they must have been afraid of you."

Lydia said, as if she had not understood, "I had hard work to get my certificate. But I was older than I looked."

"That is much better," remarked Staniford, "than being younger than you look. I am twenty-eight, and people take me for thirty-four. I 'm a prematurely middle-aged man. I wish you would tell me, Miss Blood, a little about South Bradfield. I 've been trying to make out whether I was ever there. I tramped nearly everywhere when I was a student. What sort of people are they there?"

"Oh, they are very nice people," said Lydia.

"Do you like them?"

"I never thought whether I did. They are nearly all old. Their children have gone away; they don't seem to live; they are

just staying. When I first came there I was a little girl. One day I went into the grave-yard and counted the stones; there were three times as many as there were living persons in the village."

"I think I know the kind of place," said Staniford. "I suppose you 're not very home-sick?"

"Not for the place," answered Lydia, evasively.

"Of course," Staniford hastened to add, "you miss your own family circle." To this she made no reply. It is the habit of people bred like her to remain silent for want of some sort of formulated comment upon remarks to which they assent.

Staniford fell into a musing mood, which was without visible embarrassment to the young girl, who must have been inured to much severer silences in the society of South Bradfield. He remained staring at her throughout his reverie, which in fact related to her. He was thinking what sort of an old maid she would have become if she had remained in that village. He fancied elements of hardness and sharpness in her which would have asserted themselves as the joyless years went on, like the bony structure of her face as the softness of youth

left it. She was saved from that, whatever was to be her destiny in Italy. From South Bradfield to Venice, — what a prodigious transition! It seemed as if it must transfigure her. "Miss Blood," he exclaimed, "I wish I could be with you when you first see Venice!"

"Yes?" said Lydia.

Even the interrogative comment, with the rising inflection, could not chill his enthusiasm. "It is really the greatest sight in the world."

Lydia had apparently no comment to make on this fact. She waited tranquilly a while before she said, "My father used to talk about Italy to me when I was little. He wanted to go. My mother said afterwards —after she had come home with me to South Bradfield—that she always believed he would have lived if he had gone there. He had consumption."

"Oh!" said Staniford softly. Then he added, with the tact of his sex, "Miss Blood, you mustn't take cold, sitting here with me. This wind is chilly. Shall I go below and get you some more wraps?"

"No, thank you," said Lydia; "I believe I will go down, now."

She went below to her room, and then

came out into the cabin with some sewing at which she sat and stitched by the lamp. The captain was writing in his log-book; Dunham and Hicks were playing checkers together. Staniford, from a corner of a locker, looked musingly upon this curious family circle. It was not the first time that its occupations had struck him oddly. Sometimes when they were all there together, Dunham read aloud. Hicks knew tricks of legerdemain which he played cleverly. The captain told some very good stories, and led off in the laugh. Lydia always sewed and listened. She did not seem to find herself strangely placed, and her presence characterised all that was said and done with a charming innocence. As a bit of life, it was as pretty as it was quaint.

"Really," Staniford said to Dunham, as they turned in, that night, "she has domesticated us."

"Yes," assented Dunham with enthusiasm; "isn't she a nice girl?"

"She 's intolerably passive. Or not passive, either. She says what she thinks, but she doesn't seem to have thought of many things. Did she ever tell you about her father?"

"No," said Dunham.

"I mean about his dying of consumption?"

"No, she never spoke of him to me. Was he"—

"Um. It appears that we have been upon terms of confidence, then." Staniford paused, with one boot in his hand. "I should never have thought it."

"What was her father?" asked Dunham.

"Upon my word, I don't know. I didn't seem to get beyond elemental statements of intimate fact with her. He died in California, where she was born; and he always had a longing to go to Italy. That was rather pretty."

"It 's very touching, I think."

"Yes, of course. We might fancy this about Lurella: that she has a sort of piety in visiting the scenes that her father wished to visit, and that—Well, anything is predicable of a girl who says so little and looks so much. She 's certainly very handsome; and I 'm bound to say that her room could not have been better than her company, so far."

X.

THE dress that Lydia habitually wore was one which her aunt Maria studied from the costume of a summer boarder who had spent a preceding summer at the seashore, and who found her yachting-dress perfectly adapted to tramping over the South Bradfield hills. Thus reverting to its original use on shipboard, the costume looked far prettier on Lydia than it had on the summer boarder from whose unconscious person it had been plagiarised. It was of the darkest blue flannel, and was fitly set off with those bright ribbons at the throat which women know how to dispose there according to their complexions. One day the bow was scarlet, and another crimson; Staniford did not know which was better, and disputed the point in vain with Dunham. They all grew to have a taste in such matters. Captain Jenness praised her dress outright, and said that he should tell his girls about it. Lydia, who had always sup-

posed it was a walking costume, remained discreetly silent when the young men recognised its nautical character. She enjoyed its success; she made some little changes in the hat she wore with it, which met the approval of the cabin family; and she tranquilly kept her black silk in reserve for Sunday. She came out to breakfast in it, and it swept the narrow spaces, as she emerged from her state-room, with so rich and deep a murmur that every one looked up. She sustained their united glance with something tenderly deprecatory and appealingly conscious in her manner, much as a very sensitive girl in some new finery meets the eyes of her brothers when she does not know whether to cry or laugh at what they will say. Thomas almost dropped a plate. "Goodness!" he said, helplessly expressing the public sentiment in regard to a garment of which he alone had been in the secret. No doubt it passed his fondest dreams of its splendour; it fitted her as the sheath of the flower fits the flower.

Captain Jenness looked hard at her, but waited a decent season after saying grace before offering his compliment, which he did in drawing the carving-knife slowly across the steel. "Well, Miss Blood, that 's right!"

Lydia blushed richly, and the young men made their obeisances across the table.

The flushes and pallors chased each other over her face, and the sight of her pleasure in being beautiful charmed Staniford. "If she were used to worship she would have taken our adoration more arrogantly," he said to his friend when they went on deck after breakfast. "I can place her; but one's circumstance doesn't always account for one in America, and I can't make out yet whether she's ever been praised for being pretty. Some of our hill-country people would have felt like hushing up her beauty, as almost sinful, and some would have gone down before it like Greeks. I can't tell whether she knows it all or not; but if you suppose her unconscious till now, it's pathetic. And black silks must be too rare in her life not to be celebrated by a high tumult of inner satisfaction. I'm glad we bowed down to the new dress."

"Yes," assented Dunham, with an uneasy absence; "but—Staniford, I should like to propose to Captain Jenness our having service this morning. It is the eleventh Sunday after"—

"Ah, yes!" said Staniford. "It *is* Sunday, isn't it? I *thought* we had breakfast rather

later than usual. All over the Christian world, on land and sea, there is this abstruse relation between a late breakfast and religious observances."

Dunham looked troubled. "I wish you wouldn't talk that way, Staniford, and I hope you won't say anything"—

"To interfere with your proposition? My dear fellow, I am at least a gentleman."

"I beg your pardon," said Dunham, gratefully.

Staniford even went himself to the captain with Dunham's wish; it is true the latter assumed the more disagreeable part of proposing the matter to Hicks, who gave a humorous assent, as one might to a joke of doubtful feasibility.

Dunham gratified both his love for social management and his zeal for his church in this organisation of worship; and when all hands were called aft, and stood round in decorous silence, he read the lesson for the day, and conducted the service with a gravity astonishing to the sailors, who had taken him for a mere dandy. Staniford bore his part in the responses from the same prayer-book with Captain Jenness, who kept up a devout, inarticulate under-growl, and came out strong on particular words when

he got his bearings through his spectacles. Hicks and the first officer silently shared another prayer-book, and Lydia offered half hers to Mr. Mason.

When the hymn was given out, she waited while an experimental search for the tune took place among the rest. They were about to abandon the attempt, when she lifted her voice and began to sing. She sang as she did in the meeting-house at South Bradfield, and her voice seemed to fill all the hollow height and distance; it rang far off like a mermaid's singing, on high like an angel's; it called with the same deep appeal to sense and soul alike. The sailors stood rapt; Dunham kept up a show of singing for the church's sake. The others made no pretence of looking at the words; they looked at her, and she began to falter, hearing herself alone. Then Staniford struck in again wildly, and the sea-voices lent their powerful discord, while the girl's contralto thrilled through all.

"Well, Miss Blood," said the captain, when the service had ended in that subordination of the spiritual to the artistic interest which marks the process and the close of so much public worship in our day, "you 've given us a surprise. I guess we shall keep

you pretty busy with our calls for music, after this."

"She is a genius!" observed Staniford at his first opportunity with Dunham. "I knew there must be something the matter. Of course she 's going out to school her voice; and she hasn't strained it in idle babble about her own affairs! I must say that Lu— Miss Blood's power of holding her tongue commands my homage. Was it her little *coup* to wait till we got into that hopeless hobble before she struck in?"

"Coup? For shame, Staniford! Coup at such a time!"

"Well, well! I don't say so. But for the theatre one can't begin practising these effects too soon. Really, that voice puts a new complexion on Miss Blood. I have a theory to reconstruct. I have been philosophising her as a simple country girl. I must begin on an operatic novice. I liked the other better. It gave value to the black silk; as a singer she'll wear silk as habitually as a cocoon. She will have to take some stage name; translate Blood into Italian. We shall know her hereafter as La Sanguinelli; and when she comes to Boston we shall make our modest brags about going out to Europe with her. I don't know; I think I

preferred the idyllic flavour I was beginning to find in the presence of the ordinary, futureless young girl, voyaging under the chaperonage of her own innocence,—the little sister of the Whole Ship. But this crepusculant prima donna—no, I don't like it;—though it explains some things. These splendid creatures are never sent half equipped into the world. I fancy that where there's an operatic voice there's an operatic soul to go with it. Well, La Sanguinelli will wear me out, yet! Suggest some new topic, Dunham; talk of something else, for heaven's sake!"

"Do you suppose," asked Dunham, "that she would like to help get up some *musicales*, to pass away the time?"

"Oh, do you call that talking of something else? What an insatiate organiser you are! You organise shuffleboard; you organise public worship; you want to organise musicales. She would have to do all your music for you."

"I think she would like to go in for it," said Dunham. "It must be a pleasure to exercise such a gift as that, and now that it's come out in the way it has, it would be rather awkward for us not to recognise it."

Staniford refused point-blank to be a party to the new enterprise, and left Dun-

ham to his own devices at dinner, where he proposed the matter.

"If you had my Persis here, now," observed Captain Jenness, "with her parlour organ, you could get along."

"I wish Miss Jenness *was* here," said Dunham, politely. "But we must try to get on as it is. With Miss Blood's voice to start with, nothing ought to discourage us." Dunham had a thin and gentle pipe of his own, and a fairish style in singing, but with his natural modesty he would not offer himself as a performer except in default of all others. "Don't *you* sing, Mr. Hicks?"

"Anything to oblige a friend," returned Hicks. "But I don't sing—before Miss Blood."

"Miss Blood," said Staniford, listening in ironic safety, "you overawe us all. I never did sing, but I think I should want to make an effort if you were not by."

"But don't you—don't you *play* something, anything?" persisted Dunham, in desperate appeal to Hicks.

"Well, yes," the latter admitted, "I play the flute a little."

"Flutes on water!" said Staniford. Hicks looked at him in sulky dislike, but as if resolved not to be put down by him.

"And have you got your flute with you?" demanded Dunham, joyously.

"Yes, I have," replied Hicks.

"Then we are all right. I think I can carry a part, and if you will play to Miss Blood's singing"—

"Try it this evening, if you like," said the other.

"Well, ah—I don't know. Perhaps—we hadn't better begin this evening."

Staniford laughed at Dunham's embarrassment. "You might have a sacred concert, and Mr. Hicks could represent the shawms and cymbals with his flute."

Dunham looked sorry for Staniford's saying this. Captain Jenness stared at him, as if his taking the names of these scriptural instruments in vain were a kind of blasphemy, and Lydia seemed puzzled and a little troubled.

"I didn't think of its being Sunday," said Hicks, with what Staniford felt to be a cunning assumption of manly frankness, "or any more Sunday than usual; seems as if we had had a month of Sundays already since we sailed. I'm not much on religion myself, but I shouldn't like to interfere with other people's principles."

Staniford was vexed with himself for his

scornful pleasantry, and vexed with the others for taking it so seriously and heavily, and putting him so unnecessarily in the wrong. He was angry with Dunham, and he said to Hicks, "Very just sentiments."

"I am glad you like them," replied Hicks, with sullen apprehension of the offensive tone.

Staniford turned to Lydia. "I suppose that in South Bradfield your Sabbath is over at sundown on Sunday evening?"

"That used to be the custom," answered the girl. "I've heard my grandfather tell of it."

"Oh, yes," interposed Captain Jenness. "They used to keep Saturday night down our way, too. I can remember when I was a boy. It came pretty hard to begin so soon, but it seemed to kind of break it, after all, having a night in."

The captain did not know what Staniford began to laugh at. "Our Puritan ancestors knew just how much human nature could stand, after all. We did not have an uninterrupted Sabbath till the Sabbath had become much milder. Is that it?"

The captain had probably no very clear notion of what this meant, but simply felt it to be a critical edge of some sort. "I

don't know as you can have too much religion," he remarked. "I've seen some pretty rough customers in the church, but I always thought, What would they be out of it!"

"Very true!" said Staniford, smiling. He wanted to laugh again, but he liked the captain too well to do that; and then he began to rage in his heart at the general stupidity which had placed him in the attitude of mocking at religion,—a thing he would have loathed to do. It seemed to him that Dunham was answerable for his false position. "But we shall not see the right sort of Sabbath till Mr. Dunham gets his Catholic church fully going," he added.

They all started, and looked at Dunham as good Protestants must when some one whom they would never have suspected of Catholicism turns out to be a Catholic. Dunham cast a reproachful glance at his friend, but said simply, "I am a Catholic, —that is true; but I do not admit the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome."

The rest of the company apparently could not follow him in making this distinction; perhaps some of them did not quite know who the Bishop of Rome was. Lydia continued to look at him in fascination; Hicks seemed disposed to whistle, if such a thing

were allowable; Mr. Watterson devoutly waited for the captain. "Well," observed the captain at last, with the air of giving the devil his due, "I've seen some very good people among the Catholics."

"That's so, Captain Jenness," said the first officer.

"I don't see," said Lydia, without relaxing her gaze, "why, if you are a Catholic, you read the service of a Protestant church."

"It is not a Protestant church," answered Dunham, gently, "as I have tried to explain to you."

"The Episcopalian?" demanded Captain Jenness.

"The Episcopalian," sweetly reiterated Dunham.

"I should like to know what kind of a church it is, then," said Captain Jenness, triumphantly.

"An Apostolic church."

Captain Jenness rubbed his nose, as if this were a new kind of church to him.

"Founded by Saint Henry VIII. himself," interjected Staniford.

"No, Staniford," said Dunham, with a soft repressiveness. And now a threatening light of zeal began to burn in his kindly eyes. These souls had plainly been given

into his hands for ecclesiastical enlightenment. "If our friends will allow me, I will explain"—

Staniford's shaft had recoiled upon his own head. "O Lord!" he cried, getting up from the table, "I can't stand *that!*" The others regarded him, as he felt, even to that weasel of a Hicks, as a sheep of uncommon blackness. He went on deck, and smoked a cigar without relief. He still heard the girl's voice in singing; and he still felt in his nerves the quality of latent passion in it which had thrilled him when she sang. His thought ran formlessly upon her future, and upon what sort of being was already fated to waken her to those possibilities of intense suffering and joy which he imagined in her. A wound at his heart, received long before, hurt vaguely; and he felt old.

XI.

NO one said anything more of the musicales, and the afternoon and evening wore away without general talk. Each seemed willing to keep apart from the rest. Dunham suffered Lydia to come on deck alone after tea, and Staniford found her there, in her usual place, when he went up some time later. He approached her at once, and said, smiling down into her face, to which the moonlight gave a pale mystery, "Miss Blood, did you think I was very wicked to-day at dinner?"

Lydia looked away, and waited a moment before she spoke. "I don't know," she said. Then, impulsively, "Did you?" she asked.

"No, honestly, I don't think I was," answered Staniford. "But I seemed to leave that impression on the company. I felt a little nasty, that was all; and I tried to hurt Mr. Dunham's feelings. But I shall make it right with him before I sleep; he

knows that. He 's used to having me repent at leisure. Do you ever walk Sunday night?"

"Yes, sometimes," said Lydia interrogatively.

"I 'm glad of that. Then I shall not offend against your scruples if I ask you to join me in a little ramble, and you will refuse from purely personal considerations. Will you walk with me?"

"Yes." Lydia rose.

"And will you take my arm?" asked Staniford, a little surprised at her readiness.

"Thank you."

She put her hand upon his arm, confidently enough, and they began to walk up and down the stretch of open deck together.

"Well," said Staniford, "did Mr. Dunham convince you all?"

"I think he talks beautifully about it," replied Lydia, with quaint stiffness.

"I am glad you see what a very good fellow he is. I have a real affection for Dunham."

"Oh, yes, he 's good. At first it surprised me. I mean"—

"No, no," Staniford quickly interrupted, "why did it surprise you to find Dunham good?"

"I don't know. You don't expect a person to be serious who is so—so"—

"Handsome?"

"No,—so—I don't know just how to say it: fashionable."

Staniford laughed. "Why, Miss Blood, you're fashionably dressed yourself, not to go any further, and you're serious."

"It's different with a man," the girl explained.

"Well, then, how about me?" asked Staniford. "Am I too well dressed to be expected to be serious?"

"Mr. Dunham always seems in earnest," Lydia answered, evasively.

"And you think one can't be in earnest without being serious?" Lydia suffered one of those silences to ensue in which Staniford had already found himself helpless. He knew that he should be forced to break it: and he said, with a little spiteful mocking, "I suppose the young men of South Bradfield are both serious and earnest."

"How?" asked Lydia.

"The young men of South Bradfield."

"I told you that there were none. They all go away."

"Well, then, the young men of Springfield, of Keene, of Greenfield."

"I can't tell. I am not acquainted there."

Staniford had begun to have a disagreeable suspicion that her ready consent to walk up and down with a young man in the moonlight might have come from a habit of the kind. But it appeared that her fearlessness was like that of wild birds in those desert islands where man has never come. The discovery gave him pleasure out of proportion to its importance, and he paced back and forth in a silence that no longer chafed. Lydia walked very well, and kept his step with rhythmic unison, as if they were walking to music together. "That 's the time in her pulses," he thought, and then he said, "Then you don't have a great deal of social excitement, I suppose,—dancing, and that kind of thing? Though perhaps you don't approve of dancing?"

"Oh, yes, I like it. Sometimes the summer boarders get up little dances at the hotel."

"Oh, the summer boarders!" Staniford had overlooked them. "The young men get them up, and invite the ladies?" he pursued.

"There are no young men, generally, among the summer boarders. The ladies dance together. Most of the gentlemen are old, or else invalids."

"Oh!" said Staniford.

"At the Mill Village, where I've taught two winters, they have dances sometimes,—the mill hands do."

"And do you go?"

"No. They are nearly all French Canadians and Irish people."

"Then you like dancing because there are no gentlemen to dance with?"

"There are gentlemen at the picnics."

"The picnics?"

"The teachers' picnics. They have them every summer, in a grove by the pond."

There was, then, a high-browed, dyspeptic high-school principal, and the desert-island theory was probably all wrong. It vexed Staniford, when he had so nearly got the compass of her social life, to find this unexplored corner in it.

"And I suppose you are leaving very agreeable friends among the teachers?"

"Some of them are pleasant. But I don't know them very well. I've only been to one of the picnics."

Staniford drew a long, silent breath. After all, he knew everything. He mechanically dropped a little the arm on which her hand rested, that it might slip further within. Her timid remoteness had its charm,

and he fell to thinking, with amusement, how she who was so subordinate to him, was, in the dimly known sphere in which he had been groping to find her, probably a person of authority and consequence. It satisfied a certain domineering quality in him to have reduced her to this humble attitude, while it increased the protecting tenderness he was beginning to have for her. His mind went off further upon this matter of one's different attitudes toward different persons; he thought of men, and women too, before whom he should instantly feel like a boy, if he could be confronted with them, even in his present lordliness of mood. In a fashion of his when he convicted himself of anything, he laughed aloud. Lydia shrank a little from him, in question. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I was laughing at something I happened to think of. Do you ever find yourself struggling very hard to be what you think people think you are?"

"Oh, yes," replied Lydia. "But I thought no one else did."

"Everybody does the thing that we think no one else does," said Staniford, sententiously.

"I don't know whether I quite like it," said Lydia. "It seems like hypocrisy. It

used to worry me. Sometimes I wondered if I had any real self. I seemed to be just what people made me, and a different person to each."

"I'm glad to hear it, Miss Blood. We are companions in hypocrisy. As we are such nonentities, we shall not affect each other at all." Lydia laughed. "Don't you think so? What are you laughing at? I told you what I was laughing at!"

"But I didn't ask you."

"You wished to know."

"Yes, I did."

"Then you ought to tell me what I wish to know."

"It's nothing," said Lydia. "I thought you were mistaken in what you said."

"Oh! Then you believe that there's enough of you to affect me?"

"No."

"The other way, then?"

She did not answer.

"I'm delighted!" exclaimed Staniford. "I hope I don't exert an uncomfortable influence. I should be very unhappy to think so." Lydia stooped side-wise, away from him, to get a fresh hold of her skirt, which she was carrying in her right hand, and she hung a little more heavily upon his arm. "I

hope I make you think better of yourself,—very self-satisfied, very conceited even."

"No," said Lydia.

"You pique my curiosity beyond endurance. Tell me how I make you feel."

She looked quickly round at him, as if to see whether he was in earnest. "Why, it's nothing," she said. "You made me feel as if you were laughing at everybody."

It flatters a man to be accused of sarcasm by the other sex, and Staniford was not superior to the soft pleasure of the reproach. "Do you think I make other people feel so, too?"

"Mr. Dunham said"—

"Oh! Mr. Dunham has been talking me over with you, has he? What did he tell you of me? There is nobody like a true friend for dealing an underhand blow at one's reputation. Wait till you hear my account of Dunham! What did he say?"

"He said that was only your way of laughing at yourself."

"The traitor! What did you say?"

"I don't know that I said anything."

"You were reserving your opinion for my own hearing?"

"No."

'Why don't you tell me what you thought?

It might be of great use to me. I 'm in earnest, now; I 'm serious. Will you tell me?"

"Yes, sometime," said Lydia, who was both amused and mystified at this persistence.

"When? To-morrow?"

"Oh, that 's too soon. When I get to Venice!"

"Ah! That 's a subterfuge. You know we shall part in Trieste."

"I thought," said Lydia, "you were coming to Venice, too."

"Oh, yes, but I shouldn't be able to see you there."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Why, because"— He was near telling the young girl who hung upon his arm, and walked up and down with him in the moonlight, that in the wicked Old World towards which they were sailing young people could not meet save in the sight and hearing of their elders, and that a confidential analysis of character would be impossible between them there. The wonder of her being where she was, as she was, returned upon him with a freshness that it had been losing in the custom of the week past. "Because you will be so much taken up with your friends," he said, lamely.

He added quickly, "There's one thing I should like to know, Miss Blood: did you hear what Mr. Dunham and I were saying, last night, when we stood in the gangway and kept you from coming up?"

Lydia waited a moment. Then she said, "Yes. I couldn't help hearing it."

"That's all right. I don't care for your hearing what I said. But—I hope it wasn't true?"

"I couldn't understand what you meant by it," she answered, evasively, but rather faintly.

"Thanks," said Staniford. "I didn't mean anything. It was merely the guilty consciousness of a generally disagreeable person." They walked up and down many turns without saying anything. She could not have made any direct protest, and it pleased him that she could not frame any flourishing generalities. "Yes," Staniford resumed, "I will try to see you as I pass through Venice. And I will come to hear you sing when you come out at Milan."

"Come out? At Milan?"

"Why, yes! You are going to study at the conservatory in Milan?"

"How did you know that?" demanded Lydia.

"From hearing you to-day. May I tell you how much I liked your singing?"

"My aunt thought I ought to cultivate my voice. But I would never go upon the stage. I would rather sing in a church. I should like that better than teaching."

"I think you 're quite right," said Staniford, gravely. "It 's certainly much better to sing in a church than to sing in a theatre. Though I believe the theatre pays best."

"Oh, I don't care for that. All I should want would be to make a living."

The reference to her poverty touched him. It was a confidence, coming from one so reticent, that was of value. He waited a moment and said, "It 's surprising how well we keep our footing here, isn't it? There 's hardly any swell, but the ship pitches. I think we walk better together than alone."

"Yes," answered Lydia, "I think we do."

"You mustn't let me tire you. I 'm indefatigable."

"Oh, I 'm not tired. I like it,—walking."

"Do you walk much at home?"

"Not much. It 's a pretty good walk to the school-house."

"Oh! Then you like walking at sea better than you do on shore?"

"It isn't the custom, much. If there were

any one else, I should have liked it there. But it 's rather dull, going by yourself."

"Yes, I understand how that is," said Staniford, dropping his teasing tone. "It 's stupid. And I suppose it 's pretty lonesome at South Bradfield every way."

"It is,—winters," admitted Lydia. "In the summer you see people, at any rate, but in winter there are days and days when hardly any one passes. The snow is banked up everywhere."

He felt her give an involuntary shiver; and he began to talk to her about the climate to which she was going. It was all stranger to her than he could have realised, and less intelligible. She remembered California very dimly, and she had no experience by which she could compare and adjust his facts. He made her walk up and down more and more swiftly, as he lost himself in the comfort of his own talking and of her listening, and he failed to note the little falterings with which she expressed her weariness. All at once he halted, and said, "Why, you 're out of breath! I beg your pardon. You should have stopped me. Let us sit down." He wished to walk across the deck to where the seats were, but she just perceptibly withstood his motion, and he forbore.

"I think I won't sit down," she said. "I will go down-stairs." She began withdrawing her hand from his arm. He put his right hand upon hers, and when it came out of his arm it remained in his hand.

"I'm afraid you won't walk with me again," said Staniford. "I've tired you shamefully."

"Oh, not at all!"

"And you will?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. You're very amiable." He still held her hand. He pressed it. The pressure was not returned, but her hand seemed to quiver and throb in his like a bird held there. For the time neither of them spoke, and it seemed a long time. Staniford found himself carrying her hand towards his lips; and she was helplessly, trustingly, letting him.

He dropped her hand, and said, abruptly, "good-night."

"Good-night," she answered, and ceased from his side like a ghost.

XII.

STANIFORD sat in the moonlight, and tried to think what the steps were that had brought him to this point; but there were no steps of which he was sensible. He remembered thinking the night before that the conditions were those of flirtation; to-night this had not occurred to him. The talk had been of the dullest commonplaces; yet he had pressed her hand and kept it in his, and had been about to kiss it. He bitterly considered the disparity between his present attitude and the stand he had taken when he declared to Dunham that it rested with them to guard her peculiar isolation from anything that she could remember with pain or humiliation when she grew wiser in the world. He recalled his rage with Hicks, and the insulting condemnation of his bearing towards him ever since; and could Hicks have done worse? He had done better: he had kept away from her; he had let her alone.

That night Staniford slept badly, and woke with a restless longing to see the girl, and to read in her face whatever her thought of him had been. But Lydia did not come out to breakfast. Thomas reported that she had a headache, and that he had already carried her the tea and toast she wanted.

"Well, it seems kind of lonesome without her," said the captain. "It don't seem as if we could get along."

It seemed desolate to Staniford, who let the talk flag and fail round him without an effort to rescue it. All the morning he lurked about, keeping out of Dunham's way, and fighting hard through a dozen pages of a book, to which he struggled to nail his wandering mind. A headache was a little matter, but it might be even less than a headache. He belated himself purposely at dinner, and entered the cabin just as Lydia issued from her state-room door.

She was pale and looked heavy-eyed. As she lifted her glance to him, she blushed; and he felt the answering red stain his face. When she sat down, the captain patted her on the shoulder with his burly right hand, and said he could not navigate the ship if she got sick. He pressed her to eat of this and that; and when she would not, he said,

Well, there was no use trying to force an appetite, and that she would be better all the sooner for dieting. Hicks went to his state-room, and came out with a box of guava jelly, from his private stores, and won a triumph enviable in all eyes when Lydia consented to like it with the chicken. Dunham plundered his own and Staniford's common stock of dainties for her dessert; the first officer agreed and applauded right and left; Staniford alone sat taciturn and inoperative, watching her face furtively. Once her eyes wandered to the side of the table where he and Dunham sat; then she coloured and dropped her glance.

He took his book again after dinner, and with his finger between the leaves, at the last-read, unintelligible page, he went out to the bow, and crouched down there to renew the conflict of the morning. It was not long before Dunham followed. He stooped over to lay a hand on either of Staniford's shoulders.

"What makes you avoid me, old man?" he demanded, looking into Staniford's face with his frank, kind eyes.

"And I avoid you?" asked Staniford.

"Yes; why?"

"Because I feel rather shabby, I suppose.

I knew I felt shabby, but I didn't know I was avoiding you."

"Well, no matter. If you feel shabby, it's all right; but I hate to have you feel shabby." He got his left hand down into Staniford's right, and a tacit reconciliation was transacted between them. Dunham looked about for a seat, and found a stool, which he planted in front of Staniford. "Wasn't it pleasant to have our little lady back at table, again?"

"Very," said Staniford.

"I couldn't help thinking how droll it was that a person whom we all considered a sort of incumbrance and superfluity at first should really turn out an object of prime importance to us all. Isn't it amusing?"

"Very droll."

"Why, we were quite lost without her, at breakfast. I couldn't have imagined her taking such a hold upon us all, in so short a time. But she's a pretty creature, and as good as she's pretty."

"I remember agreeing with you on those points before." Staniford feigned to suppress fatigue.

Dunham observed him. "I know you don't take so much interest in her as—as

the rest of us do, and I wish you did. You don't know what a lovely nature she is."

"No?"

"No; and I'm sure you'd like her."

"Is it important that I should like her? Don't let your enthusiasm for the sex carry you beyond bounds, Dunham."

"No, no. Not important, but very pleasant. And I think acquaintance with such a girl would give you some new ideas of women."

"Oh, my old ones are good enough. Look here, Dunham," said Staniford, sharply; "what are you after?"

"What makes you think I'm after anything?"

"Because you're not a humbug, and because I am. My depraved spirit instantly recognised the dawning duplicity of yours. But you'd better be honest. You can't make the other thing work. What do you want?"

"I want your advice. I want your help, Staniford."

"I thought so! Coming and forgiving me in that—apostolic manner."

"Don't!"

"Well. What do you want my help for? What have you been doing?" Staniford

paused, and suddenly added: "Have you been making love to Lurella?" He said this in his ironical manner, but his smile was rather ghastly.

"For shame, Staniford!" cried Dunham. But he reddened violently.

"Then it isn't with Miss Hibbard that you want my help. I'm glad of that. It would have been awkward. I'm a little afraid of Miss Hibbard. It isn't every one has your courage, my dear fellow."

"I haven't been making love to her," said Dunham, "but—I"—

"But you what?" demanded Staniford sharply again. There had been less tension of voice in his joking about Miss Hibbard.

"Staniford," said his friend, "I don't know whether you noticed her, at dinner, when she looked across to our own side?"

"What did she do?"

"Did you notice that she—well, that she blushed a little?"

Staniford waited a while before he answered, after a gulp, "Yes, I noticed that."

"Well, I don't know how to put it exactly, but I'm afraid that I have unwittingly wronged this young girl."

"Wronged her? What the devil *do* you

mean, Dunham?" cried Staniford, with bitter impatience.

"I'm afraid—I'm afraid— Why, it's simply this: that in trying to amuse her, and make the time pass agreeably, and relieve her mind, and all that, don't you know, I've given her the impression that I'm—well—interested in her, and that she may have allowed herself—insensibly, you know—to look upon me in that light, and that she may have begun to think—that she may have become"—

"Interested in you?" interrupted Staniford rudely.

"Well—ah—well, that is—ah—well—yes!" cried Dunham, bracing himself to sustain a shout of ridicule. But Staniford did not laugh, and Dunham had courage to go on. "Of course, it sounds rather conceited to say so, but the circumstances are so peculiar that I think we ought to recognise even any possibilities of that sort."

"Oh, yes," said Staniford, gravely. "Most women, I believe, are so innocent as to think a man in love when he behaves like a lover. And this one," he added ruefully, "seems more than commonly ignorant of our ways,—of our infernal shilly-shallying, purposeless no-mindedness. She couldn't

imagine a man—a gentleman—devoting himself to her by the hour, and trying by every art to show his interest and pleasure in her society, without imagining that he wished her to like him,—love him; there's no half-way about it. She couldn't suppose him the shallow, dawdling, soulless, senseless ape he really was." Staniford was quite in a heat by this time, and Dunham listened in open astonishment.

"You are hard upon me," he said. "Of course, I have been to blame; I know that, I acknowledge it. But my motive, as you know well enough, was never to amuse myself with her, but to contribute in any way I could to her enjoyment and happiness. I"—

"*You!*" cried Staniford. "What are you talking about?"

"What are *you* talking about?" demanded Dunham, in his turn.

Staniford recollected himself. "I was speaking of abstract flirtation. I was firing into the air."

"In my case, I don't choose to call it flirtation," returned Dunham. "My purpose, I am bound to say, was thoroughly unselfish and kindly."

"My dear fellow," said Staniford, with a

bitter smile, "there can be no unselfishness and no kindliness between us and young girls, unless we mean business,—love-making. You may be sure that they feel it so, if they don't understand it so."

"I don't agree with you. I don't believe it. My own experience is that the sweetest and most generous friendships may exist between us, without a thought of anything else. And as to making love, I must beg you to remember that my love has been made once for all. I never dreamt of showing Miss Blood anything but polite attention."

"Then what are you troubled about?"

"I am troubled"—Dunham stopped helplessly, and Staniford laughed in a challenging, disagreeable way, so that the former perforce resumed: "I 'm troubled about—about her possible misinterpretation."

"Oh! Then in this case of sweet and generous friendship the party of the second part may have construed the sentiment quite differently! Well, what do you want me to do? Do you want me to take the contract off your hands?"

"You put it grossly," said Dunham.

"And *you* put it offensively!" cried the other. "My regard for the young lady is

as reverent as yours. You have no right to miscolour my words."

"Staniford, you are too bad," said Dunham, hurt even more than angered. "If I've come to you in the wrong moment—if you are vexed at anything, I'll go away, and beg your pardon for boring you."

Staniford was touched; he looked cordially into his friend's face. "I *was* vexed at something, but you never can come to me at the wrong moment, old fellow. I beg *your* pardon. *I* see your difficulty plainly enough, and I think you're quite right in proposing to hold up,—for that's what you mean, I take it?"

"Yes," said Dunham, "it is. And I don't know how she will like it. She will be puzzled and grieved by it. I hadn't thought seriously about the matter till this morning, when she didn't come to breakfast. You know I've been in the habit of asking her to walk with me every night after tea; but Saturday evening you were with her, and last night I felt sore about the affairs of the day, and rather dull, and I didn't ask her. I think she noticed it. I think she was hurt."

"You think so?" said Staniford peculiarly.

"I might not have thought so," continued Dunham, "merely because she did not come to breakfast; but her blushing when she looked across at dinner really made me uneasy."

"Very possibly you're right." Staniford mused a while before he spoke again. "Well, what do you wish me to do?"

"I must hold up, as you say, and of course she will feel the difference. I wish —I wish at least you wouldn't *avoid* her, Staniford. That's all. Any little attention from you—I know it bores you—would not only break the loneliness, but it would explain that—that my—attentions didn't—ah —hadn't meant anything."

"Oh!"

"Yes; that it's common to offer them. And she's a girl of so much force of character that when she sees the affair in its true light— I suppose I'm to blame! Yes, I ought to have told her at the beginning that I was engaged. But you can't force a fact of that sort upon a new acquaintance: it looks silly." Dunham hung his head in self-reproach.

"Well?" asked Staniford.

"Well, that's all! No, it *isn't* all, either. There's something else troubles me. Our

poor little friend *is* a blackguard, I suppose?"

"Hicks?"

"Yes."

"You have invited him to be the leader of your orchestra, haven't you?"

"Oh, don't, Staniford!" cried Dunham in his helplessness. "I should hate to see her dependent in any degree upon that little cad for society." Cad was the last English word which Dunham had got himself used to. "That was why I hoped that you wouldn't altogether neglect her. She 's here, and she 's no choice but to remain. We can't leave her to herself without the danger of leaving her to Hicks. You see?"

"Well," said Staniford gloomily, "I 'm not sure that you couldn't leave her to a worse cad than Hicks." Dunham looked up in question. "To me, for example."

"Oh, hallo!" cried Dunham.

"I don't see how I 'm to be of any use," continued the other. "I 'm not a squire of dames; I should merely make a mess of it."

"You 're mistaken, Staniford,—I 'm sure you are,—in supposing that she dislikes you," urged his friend.

"Oh, very likely."

"I know that she 's simply afraid of you."

"Don't flatter, Dunham. Why should I care whether she fears me or affects me? No, my dear fellow. This is irretrievably your own affair. I should be glad to help you out if I knew how. But I don't. In the meantime your duty is plain, whatever happens. You can't overdo the sweet and the generous in this wicked world without paying the penalty."

Staniford smiled at the distress in which Dunham went his way. He understood very well that it was not vanity, but the liveliness of a sensitive conscience, that had made Dunham search his conduct for the offence against the young girl's peace of heart which he believed he had committed, and it was the more amusing because he was so guiltless of harm. Staniford knew who was to blame for the headache and the blush. He knew that Dunham had never gone so far; that his chivalrous pleasure in her society might continue for years free from flirtation. But in spite of this conviction a little poignant doubt made itself felt, and suddenly became his whole consciousness. "Confound him!" he mused. "I wonder if she really could care anything for him!" He shut his book, and rose to his feet with such a burning in his heart that he could

not have believed himself capable of the greater rage he felt at what he just then saw. It was Lydia and Hicks seated together in the place where he had sat with her. She leaned with one arm upon the rail, in an attitude that brought all her slim young grace into evidence. She seemed on very good terms with him, and he was talking and making her laugh as Staniford had never heard her laugh before—so freely, so heartily.

XIII.

THE atoms that had been tending in Stanford's being toward a certain form suddenly arrested and shaped themselves anew at the vibration imparted by this laughter. He no longer felt himself Hicks's possible inferior, but vastly better in every way, and out of the turmoil of his feelings in regard to Lydia was evolved the distinct sense of having been trifled with. Somehow, an advantage had been taken of his sympathies and purposes, and his forbearance had been treated with contempt.

The conviction was neither increased nor diminished by the events of the evening, when Lydia brought out some music from her state-room, and Hicks appeared, flute in hand, from his, and they began practising one of the pieces together. It was a pretty enough sight. Hicks had been gradually growing a better-looking fellow; he had an undeniable picturesqueness, as he bowed his head over the music towards hers; and she,

as she held the sheet with one hand for him to see, while she noiselessly accompanied herself on the table with the fingers of the other, and tentatively sang now this passage and now that, was divine. The picture seemed pleasing to neither Staniford nor Dunham; they went on deck together, and sat down to their cigarettes in their wonted place. They did not talk of Lydia, or of any of the things that had formed the basis of their conversation hitherto, but Staniford returned to his Colorado scheme, and explained at length the nature of his purposes and expectations. He had discussed these matters before, but he had never gone into them so fully, nor with such cheerful earnestness. He said he should never marry,—he had made up his mind to that; but he hoped to make money enough to take care of his sister's boy Jim handsomely, as the little chap had been named for him. He had been thinking the matter over, and he believed that he should get back by rail and steamer as soon as he could after they reached Trieste. He was not sorry he had come; but he could not afford to throw away too much time on Italy, just then.

Dunham, on his part, talked a great deal of Miss Hibbard, and of some curious psycho-

logical characteristics of her dyspepsia. He asked Staniford whether he had ever shown him the photograph of Miss Hibbard taken by Sarony when she was on to New York the last time: it was a three-quarters view, and Dunham thought it the best she had had done. He spoke of her generous qualities, and of the interest she had always had in the Diet Kitchen, to which, as an invalid, her attention had been particularly directed: and he said that in her last letter she had mentioned a project for establishing diet kitchens in Europe, on the Boston plan. When their talk grew more impersonal and took a wider range, they gathered suggestion from the situation, and remarked upon the immense solitude of the sea. They agreed that there was something weird in the long continuance of fine weather, and that the moon had a strange look. They spoke of the uncertainty of life. Dunham regretted, as he had often regretted before, that his friend had no fixed religious belief; and Staniford gently accepted his solicitude, and said that he had at least a conviction if not a creed. He then begged Dunham's pardon in set terms for trying to wound his feelings the day before; and in the silent hand-clasp that followed they renewed all the cordiality

of their friendship. From time to time, as they talked, the music from below came up fitfully, and once they had to pause as Lydia sang through the song that she and Hicks were practising.

As the days passed their common interest in the art brought Hicks and the young girl almost constantly together, and the sound of their concerting often filled the ship. The musicales, less formal than Dunham had intended, and perhaps for that reason a source of rapidly diminishing interest with him, superseded both ring-toss and shuffle-board, and seemed even more acceptable to the ship's company as an entertainment. One evening, when the performers had been giving a piece of rather more than usual excellence and difficulty, one of the sailors, deputed by his mates, came aft, with many clumsy shows of deference, and asked them to give Marching through Georgia. Hicks found this out of his repertory, but Lydia sang it. Then the group at the forecastle shouted with one voice for Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching, and so beguiled her through the whole list of war-songs. She ended with one unknown to her listeners, but better than all the rest in its pathetic words and music, and when she had

sung The Flag 's come back to Tennessee, the spokesman of the sailors came aft again, to thank her for his mates, and to say they would not spoil that last song by asking for anything else. It was a charming little triumph for her, as she sat surrounded by her usual court: the captain was there to countenance the freedom the sailors had taken, and Dunham and Staniford stood near, but Hicks, at her right hand, held the place of honour.

The next night Staniford found her alone in the waist of the ship, and drew up a stool beside the rail where she sat.

"We all enjoyed your singing so much, last night, Miss Blood. I think Mr. Hicks plays charmingly, but I believe I prefer to hear your voice alone."

"Thank you," said Lydia, looking down, demurely.

"It must be a great satisfaction to feel that you can give so much pleasure."

"I don't know," she said, passing the palm of one hand over the back of the other.

"When you are a *prima donna* you mustn't forget your old friends of the Aroostook. We shall all take vast pride in you."

It was not a question, and Lydia answered nothing. Staniford, who had rather obliged himself to this advance, with some dim pur-

pose of showing that nothing had occurred to alienate them since the evening of their promenade, without having proved to himself that it was necessary to do this, felt that he was growing angry. It irritated him to have her sit as unmoved after his words as if he had not spoken.

"Miss Blood," he said, "I envy you your gift of snubbing people."

Lydia looked at him. "Snubbing people?" she echoed.

"Yes; your power of remaining silent when you wish to put down some one who has been wittingly or unwittingly impertinent."

"I don't know what you mean," she said in a sort of breathless way.

"And you didn't intend to mark your displeasure at my planning your future?"

"No! We had talked of that. I" —

"And you were not vexed with me for anything? I have been afraid that I—that you"— Staniford found that he was himself getting short of breath. He had begun with the intention of mystifying her, but matters had suddenly taken another course, and he was really anxious to know whether any disagreeable associations with that night lingered in her mind. With this longing

came a natural inability to find the right word. "I was afraid"—he repeated, and then he stopped again. Clearly, he could not tell her that he was afraid he had gone too far; but this was what he meant. "You don't walk with me, any more, Miss Blood," he concluded, with an air of burlesque reproach.

"You haven't asked me—since," she said.

He felt a singular value and significance in this word "since." It showed that her thoughts had been running parallel with his own; it permitted, if it did not signify, that he should resume the mood of that time, where their parting had interrupted it. He enjoyed the fact to the utmost, but he was not sure that he wished to do what he was permitted. "Then I didn't tire you?" he merely asked. He was not sure, now he came to think of it, that he liked her willingness to recur to that time. He liked it, but not quite in the way he would have liked to like it.

"No," she said.

"The fact is," he went on aimlessly, "that I thought I had rather abused your kindness. Besides," he added, veering off, "I was afraid I should be an interruption to the musical exercises."

"Oh, no," said Lydia. "Mr. Dunham hasn't arranged anything yet." Staniford thought this uncandid. It was fighting shy of Hicks, who was the person in his own mind; and it re-awakened a suspicion which was lurking there. "Mr. Dunham seems to have lost his interest."

This struck Staniford as an expression of pique; it re-awakened quite another suspicion. It was evident that she was hurt at the cessation of Dunham's attentions. He was greatly minded to say that Dunham was a fool, but he ended by saying, with sarcasm, "I suppose he saw that he was superseded."

"Mr. Hicks plays well," said Lydia, judicially, "but he doesn't really know so much of music as Mr. Dunham."

"No?" responded Staniford, with irony. "I will tell Dunham. No doubt he's been suffering the pangs of professional jealousy. That must be the reason why he keeps away."

"Keeps away?" asked Lydia.

"*Now* I've made an ass of myself!" thought Staniford. "You said that he seemed to have lost his interest," he answered her.

"Oh!—yes!" assented Lydia. And then

she remained rather distraught, pulling at the ruffling of her dress.

"Dunham is a very accomplished man," said Staniford, finding the usual satisfaction in pressing his breast against the thorn. "He 's a great favourite in society. He 's up to no end of things." Staniford uttered these praises in a curiously bitter tone. "He 's a capital talker. Don't you think he talks well?"

"I don't know; I suppose I haven't seen enough people to be a good judge."

"Well, you 've seen enough people to know that he 's very good-looking?"

"Yes?"

"You don't mean to say you *don't* think him good-looking?"

"No,—oh, no; I mean—that is—I don't know anything about his looks. But he resembles a lady who used to come from Boston, summers. I thought he must be her brother."

"Oh, then you think he looks effeminate!" cried Staniford, with inner joy. "I assure you," he added with solemnity, "Dunham is one of the manliest fellows in the world!"

"Yes?" said Lydia.

Staniford rose. He was smiling gaily

as he looked over the broad stretch of empty deck, and down into Lydia's eyes. "Wouldn't you like to take a turn, now?"

"Yes," she said promptly, rising and arranging her wrap across her shoulders, so as to leave her hands free. She laid one hand in his arm and gathered her skirt with the other, and they swept round together for the start, and confronted Hicks.

"Oh!" cried Lydia, with what seemed dismay, "I promised Mr. Hicks to practise a song with him." She did not try to release her hand from Staniford's arm, but was letting it linger there irresolutely.

Staniford dropped his arm and let her hand fall. He bowed with icy stiffness, and said, with a courtesy so fierce that Mr. Hicks, on whom he glared as he spoke, quailed before it, "I yield to your prior engagement."

XIV.

IT was nothing to Staniford that she should have promised Hicks to practise a song with him, and no process of reasoning could have made it otherwise. The imaginary opponent with whom he scornfully argued the matter had not a word for himself. Neither could the young girl answer anything to the cutting speeches which he mentally made her as he sat alone chewing the end of his cigar; and he was not moved by the imploring looks which his fancy painted in her face, when he made believe that she had meekly returned to offer him some sort of reparation. Why should she excuse herself? he asked. It was he who ought to excuse himself for having been in the way. The dialogue went on at length, with every advantage to the inventor.

He was finally aware of some one standing near and looking down at him. It was the second mate, who supported himself in a conversational posture by the hand which

he stretched to the shrouds above their heads. "Are you a good sailor, Mr. Staniford?" he inquired. He and Staniford were friends in their way, and had talked together before this.

"Do you mean sea-sickness? Why?" Staniford looked up at the mate's face.

"Well, we 're going to get it, I guess, before long. We shall soon be off the Spanish coast. We 've had a great run so far."

"If it comes we must stand it. But I make it a rule never to be sea-sick beforehand."

"Well, I ain't one to borrow trouble, either. It don't run in the family. Most of us like to chance things. I chanced it for the whole war, and I come out all right. Sometimes it don't work so well."

"Ah?" said Staniford, who knew that this was a leading remark, but forbore, as he knew Mason wished to follow it up directly.

"One of us chanced it once too often, and of course it was a woman."

"The risk?"

"Not the risk. My oldest sister tried tamin' a tiger. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, a tiger won't tame worth a cent. But her pet was such a lamb most

the while that she guessed she'd chance it. It didn't work. She's at home with mother now,—three children, of course,—and he's in hell, I s'pose. He was killed 'long-side o' me at Gettysburg. Ike was a good fellow when he was sober. But my souls, the life he led that poor girl! Yes, when a man's got that tiger in him, there ought to be some quiet little war round for puttin' him out of his misery." Staniford listened silently, waiting for the mate to make the application of his grim allegory. "I s'pose I'm prejudiced; but I do *hate* a drunkard; and when I see one of 'em makin' up to a girl, I want to go to her, and tell her she'd better take a real tiger out the show, at once."

The idea which these words suggested sent a thrill to Staniford's heart, but he continued silent, and the mate went on, with the queer smile, which could be inferred rather than seen, working under his moustache and the humorous twinkle of his eyes evanescently evident under his cap peak.

"I don't go round criticisin' my superior officers, and *I* don't say anything about the responsibility the old man took. The old man 's all right, accordin' to his lights; he ain't had a tiger in the family. But if that

chap was to fall overboard,—well, I don't know *how* long it would take to lower a boat, if I was to listen to my *conscience*. There ain't really any help for him. He 's begun too young ever to get over it. He won't be ashore at Try-East an hour before he 's drunk. If our men had any spirits amongst 'em that could be begged, bought, or borrowed, he 'd be drunk now, right along. Well, I 'm off watch," said the mate, at the tap of bells. "Guess we 'll get our little gale pretty soon."

"Good-night," said Staniford, who remained pondering. He presently rose, and walked up and down the deck. He could hear Lydia and Hicks trying that song: now the voice, and now the flute; then both together; and presently a burst of laughter. He began to be angry with her ignorance and inexperience. It became intolerable to him that a woman should be going about with no more knowledge of the world than a child, and entangling herself in relations with all sorts of people. It was shocking to think of that little sot, who had now made his infirmity known to all the ship's company, admitted to association with her which looked to common eyes like courtship. From the mate's insinuation that she ought

to be warned, it was evident that they thought her interested in Hicks; and the mate had come, like Dunham, to leave the responsibility with Staniford. It only wanted now that Captain Jenness should appear with his appeal, direct or indirect.

While Staniford walked up and down, and scorned and raged at the idea that he had anything to do with the matter, the singing and fluting came to a pause in the cabin; and at the end of the next tune, which brought him to the head of the gangway stairs, he met Lydia emerging. He stopped and spoke to her, having instantly resolved, at sight of her, not to do so.

"Have you come up for breath, like a mermaid?" he asked. "Not that I 'm sure mermaids do."

"Oh, no," said Lydia. "I think I dropped my handkerchief where we were sitting."

Staniford suspected, with a sudden return to a theory of her which he had already entertained, that she had not done so. But she went lightly by him, where he stood stolid, and picked it up; and now he suspected that she had dropped it there on purpose.

"You have come back to walk with me?"

"No!" said the girl indignantly. "I

have not come back to walk with you!" She waited a moment; then she burst out with, "How dare you say such a thing to me? What right have you to speak to me so? What have I done to make you think that I would come back to"—

The fierce vibration in her voice made him know that her eyes were burning upon him and her lips trembling. He shrank before her passion as a man must before the justly provoked wrath of a woman, or even of a small girl.

"I stated a hope, not a fact," he said in meek uncandour. "Don't you think you ought to have done so?"

"I don't—I don't understand you," panted Lydia, confusedly arresting her bolts in mid-course.

Staniford pursued his guilty advantage; it was his only chance. "I gave way to Mr. Hicks when you had an engagement with me. I thought—you would come back to keep your engagement." He was still very meek.

"Excuse me," she said with self-reproach that would have melted the heart of any one but a man who was in the wrong, and was trying to get out of it at all hazards. "I didn't know what you meant—I"—

"If I had meant what you thought," interrupted Staniford nobly, for he could now afford to be generous, "I should have deserved much more than you said. But I hope you won't punish my awkwardness by refusing to walk with me."

He knew that she regarded him earnestly before she said, "I must get my shawl and hat."

"Let me go!" he entreated.

"You couldn't find them," she answered, as she vanished past him. She returned, and promptly laid her hand in his proffered arm; it was as if she were eager to make him amends for her harshness.

Staniford took her hand out, and held it while he bowed low toward her. "I declare myself satisfied."

"I don't understand," said Lydia in alarm and mortification.

"When a subject has been personally aggrieved by his sovereign, his honour is restored if they merely cross swords."

The girl laughed her delight in the extravagance. She must have been more or less than woman not to have found his flattery delicious. "But we are republicans!" she said in evasion.

"To be sure, we are republicans. Well,

then, Miss Blood, answer your free and equal one thing; is it a case of conscience?"

"How?" she asked, and Staniford did not recoil at the rusticity. This "how" for "what," and the interrogative yes, still remained. Since their first walk, she had not "wanted to know," in however great surprise she found herself.

"Are you going to walk with me because you had promised?"

"Why, of course," faltered Lydia.

"That isn't enough."

"Not enough?"

"Not enough. You must walk with me because you like to do so."

Lydia was silent.

"Do you like to do so?"

"I can't answer you," she said, releasing her hand from him.

"It was not fair to ask you. What I wish to do is to restore the original status. You have kept your engagement to walk with me, and your conscience is clear. Now, Miss Blood, may I have your company for a little stroll over the deck of the Aroostook?" He made her another very low bow.

"What must I say?" asked Lydia, joyously.

"That depends upon whether you consent.

If you consent, you must say, 'I shall be very glad.'"

"And if I don't?"

"Oh, I can't put any such decision into words."

Lydia mused a moment. "I shall be very glad," she said, and put her hand again into the arm he offered.

As happens after such a passage they were at first silent, while they walked up and down.

"If this fine weather holds," said Staniford, "and you continue as obliging as you are to-night, you can say, when people ask you how you went to Europe, that you walked the greater part of the way. Shall you continue so obliging? Will you walk with me every fine night?" pursued Staniford.

"Do you think I'd better say so?" she asked, with the joy still in her voice.

"Oh, I can't decide for you. I merely formulate your decisions after you reach them,—if they're favourable."

"Well then, what is this one?"

"Is it favourable?"

"You said you would formulate it." She laughed again, and Staniford started as one does when a nebulous association crystallises into a distinctly remembered fact.

"What a curious laugh you have!" he said. "It's like a nun's laugh. Once in France I lodged near the garden of a convent where the nuns kept a girls' school, and I used to hear them laugh. You never happened to be a nun, Miss Blood?"

"No, indeed!" cried Lydia, as if scandalised.

"Oh, I merely meant in some previous existence. Of course, I didn't suppose there was a convent in South Bradfield." He felt that the girl did not quite like the little slight his irony cast upon South Bradfield, or rather upon her for never having been anywhere else. He hastened to say, "I'm sure that in the life before this you were of the South somewhere."

"Yes?" said Lydia, interested and pleased again as one must be in romantic talk about one's-self. "Why do you think so?"

He bent a little over toward her, so as to look into the face she instinctively averted, while she could not help glancing at him from the corner of her eye. "You have the colour and the light of the South," he said. "When you get to Italy, you will live in a perpetual mystification. You will go about in a dream of some self of yours

that was native there in other days. You will find yourself retrospectively related to the olive faces and the dark eyes you meet; you will recognise sisters and cousins in the patrician ladies when you see their portraits in the palaces where you used to live in such state."

Staniford spiced his flatteries with open burlesque; the girl entered into his fantastic humour. "But if I was a nun?" she asked, gaily.

"Oh, I forgot. You were a nun. There was a nun in Venice once, about two hundred years ago, when you lived there, and a young English lord who was passing through the town was taken to the convent to hear her sing; for she was not only of 'an admirable beauty,' as he says, but sang 'extremely well.' She sang to him through the grating of the convent, and when she stopped he said, 'Die whensoever you will, you need to change neither voice nor face to be an angel!' Do you think—do you dimly recollect anything that makes you think—it might— Consider carefully; the singing extremely well, and"— He leant over again, and looked up into her face, which again she could not wholly withdraw.

"No, no!" she said, still in his mood.

"Well, you must allow it was a pretty speech."

"Perhaps," said Lydia, with sudden gravity, in which there seemed to Staniford a tender insinuation of reproach, "he was laughing at her."

"If he was, he was properly punished. He went on to Rome, and when he came back to Venice the beautiful nun was dead. He thought that his words 'seemed fatal.' Do you suppose it would kill you *now* to be jested with?"

"I don't think people like it generally."

"Why, Miss Blood, you are intense!"

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Lydia.

"You like to take things seriously. You can't bear to think that people are not the least in earnest, even when they least seem so."

"Yes," said the girl, thoughtfully, "perhaps that's true. Should you like to be made fun of, yourself?"

"I shouldn't mind it, I fancy, though it would depend a great deal upon who made fun of me. I suppose that women always laugh at men,—at their clumsiness, their want of tact, the fit of their clothes."

"I don't know. I should not do that with any one I"—

"You liked? Oh, none of them do!" cried Staniford.

"I was not going to say that," faltered the girl.

"What were you going to say?"

She waited a moment. "Yes, I was going to say that," she assented with a sigh of helpless veracity. "What makes you laugh?" she asked, in distress.

"Something I like. I'm different from you: I laugh at what I like; I like your truthfulness,—it's charming."

"I didn't know that truth need be charming."

"It had better be, in women, if it's to keep even with the other thing." Lydia seemed shocked; she made a faint, involuntary motion to withdraw her hand, but he closed his arm upon it. "Don't condemn me for thinking that fibbing is charming. I shouldn't like it at all in you. Should you in me?"

"I shouldn't in any one," said Lydia.

"Then what is it you dislike in me?" he suddenly demanded.

"I didn't say that I disliked anything in you."

"But you have made fun of something in me?"

"No, no!"

"Then it wasn't the stirring of a guilty conscience when you asked me whether I should like to be made fun of? I took it for granted you 'd been doing it."

"You are very suspicious."

"Yes; and what else?"

"Oh, you like to know just what every one thinks and feels."

"Go on!" cried Staniford. "Analyse me, formulate me!"

"That 's all."

"All I come to?"

"All I have to say."

"That 's very little. Now, I 'll begin on you. You don't care what people think or feel."

"Oh yes, I do. I care too much."

"Do you care what I think?"

"Yes."

"Then I think you 're too unsuspicious."

"Ought I to suspect somebody?" she asked, lightly.

"Oh, that 's the way with all your sex. One asks you to be suspicious, and you ask whom you shall suspect. You can do nothing

in the abstract. I should like to be suspicious for you. Will you let me?"

"Oh yes, if you like to be."

"Thanks. I shall be terribly vigilant, —a perfect dragon. And you really invest me with authority?"

"Yes."

"That's charming." Staniford drew a long breath. After a space of musing, he said, "I thought I should be able to begin by attacking some one else, but I must commence at home, and denounce myself as quite unworthy of walking to and fro, and talking nonsense to you. You must beware of me, Miss Blood."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"I am very narrow-minded and prejudiced, and I have violent antipathies. I shouldn't be able to do justice to any one I disliked."

"I think that's the trouble with all of us," said Lydia.

"Oh, but only in degree. I should not allow, if I could help it, a man whom I thought shabby, and coarse at heart, the privilege of speaking to any one I valued,— to my sister, for instance. It would shock me to find her have any taste in common with such a man, or amused by him. Don't you understand?"

"Yes," said Lydia. It seemed to him as if by some infinitely subtle and unconscious affinition she relaxed toward him as they walked. This was incomparably sweet and charming to Staniford,—too sweet as recognition of his protecting friendship to be questioned as anything else. He felt sure that she had taken his meaning, and he rested content from further trouble in regard to what it would have been impossible to express. Her tacit confidence touched a kindred spring in him, and he began to talk to her of himself: not of his character or opinions,—they had already gone over them,—but of his past life, and his future. Their strangeness to her gave certain well-worn topics novelty, and the familiar project of a pastoral career in the far West invested itself with a colour of romance which it had not worn before. She tried to remember, at his urgence, something about her childhood in California; and she told him a great deal more about South Bradfield. She described its characters and customs, and, from no vantage-ground or stand-point but her native feeling of their oddity, and what seemed her sympathy with him, made him see them as one might whose life had not been passed among them. Then they began

to compare their own traits, and amused themselves to find how many they had in common. Staniford related a singular experience of his on a former voyage to Europe, when he dreamed of a collision, and woke to hear a great trampling and uproar on deck, which afterwards turned out to have been caused by their bare escape from running into an iceberg. She said that she had had strange dreams, too, but mostly when she was a little girl; once she had had a presentiment that troubled her, but it did not come true. They both said they did not believe in such things, and agreed that it was only people's love of mystery that kept them noticed. He permitted himself to help her, with his disengaged hand, to draw her shawl closer about the shoulder that was away from him. He gave the action a philosophical and impersonal character by saying immediately afterwards: "The sea is really the only mystery left us, and that will never be explored. They circumnavigate the whole globe,"—here he put the gathered shawl into the fingers which she stretched through his arm to take it, and she said, "Oh thank you!"—"but they don't describe the sea. War and plague and famine submit to the ameliorations of science,"—

the closely drawn shawl pressed her against his shoulder; his mind wandered; he hardly knew what he was saying, — "but the one utterly inexorable calamity—the same now as when the first sail was spread—is a shipwreck."

"Yes," she said, with a deep inspiration. And now they walked back and forth in silence broken only by a casual word or desultory phrase. Once Staniford had thought the conditions of these promenades perilously suggestive of love-making; another time he had blamed himself for not thinking of this; now he neither thought nor blamed himself for not thinking. The fact justified itself, as if it had been the one perfectly right and wise thing in a world where all else might be questioned.

"Isn't it pretty late?" she asked, at last.

"If you 're tired, we 'll sit down," he said.

"What time is it?" she persisted.

"Must I look?" he pleaded. They went to a lantern, and he took out his watch and sprang the case open. "Look!" he said. "I sacrifice myself on the altar of truth." They bent their heads low together over the watch; it was not easy to make out the time. "It 's nine o'clock," said Staniford.

"It can't be; it was half-past when I came up," answered Lydia.

"One hand 's at twelve and the other at nine," he said conclusively.

"Oh, then it 's a quarter to twelve." She caught away her hand from his arm, and fled to the gangway. "I didn't dream it was so late."

The pleasure which her confession brought to his face faded at sight of Hicks, who was turning the last pages of a novel by the cabin lamp, as he followed Lydia in. It was the book that Staniford had given her.

"Hallo!" said Hicks, with companionable ease, looking up at her. "Been having quite a tramp."

She did not seem troubled by the familiarity of an address that incensed Staniford almost to the point of taking Hicks from his seat, and tossing him to the other end of the cabin. "Oh, you 've finished my book," she said. "You must tell me how you like it, to-morrow."

"I doubt it," said Hicks. "I 'm going to be sea-sick to-morrow. The captain 's been shaking his head over the barometer and powwowing with the first officer. Something 's up, and I guess it 's a gale. Goodbye; I shan't see you again for a week or so."

He nodded jocosely to Lydia, and dropped his eyes again to his book, ignoring Staniford's presence. The latter stood a moment breathing quick; then he controlled himself and went into his room. His coming roused Dunham, who looked up from his pillow. "What time is it?" he asked, stupidly.

"Twelve," said Staniford.

"Had a pleasant walk?"

"If you still think," said Staniford, savagely, "that she's painfully interested in you, you can make your mind easy. She doesn't care for either of us."

"*Either* of us?" echoed Dunham. He roused himself.

"Oh, go to sleep; *go* to sleep!" cried Staniford.

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