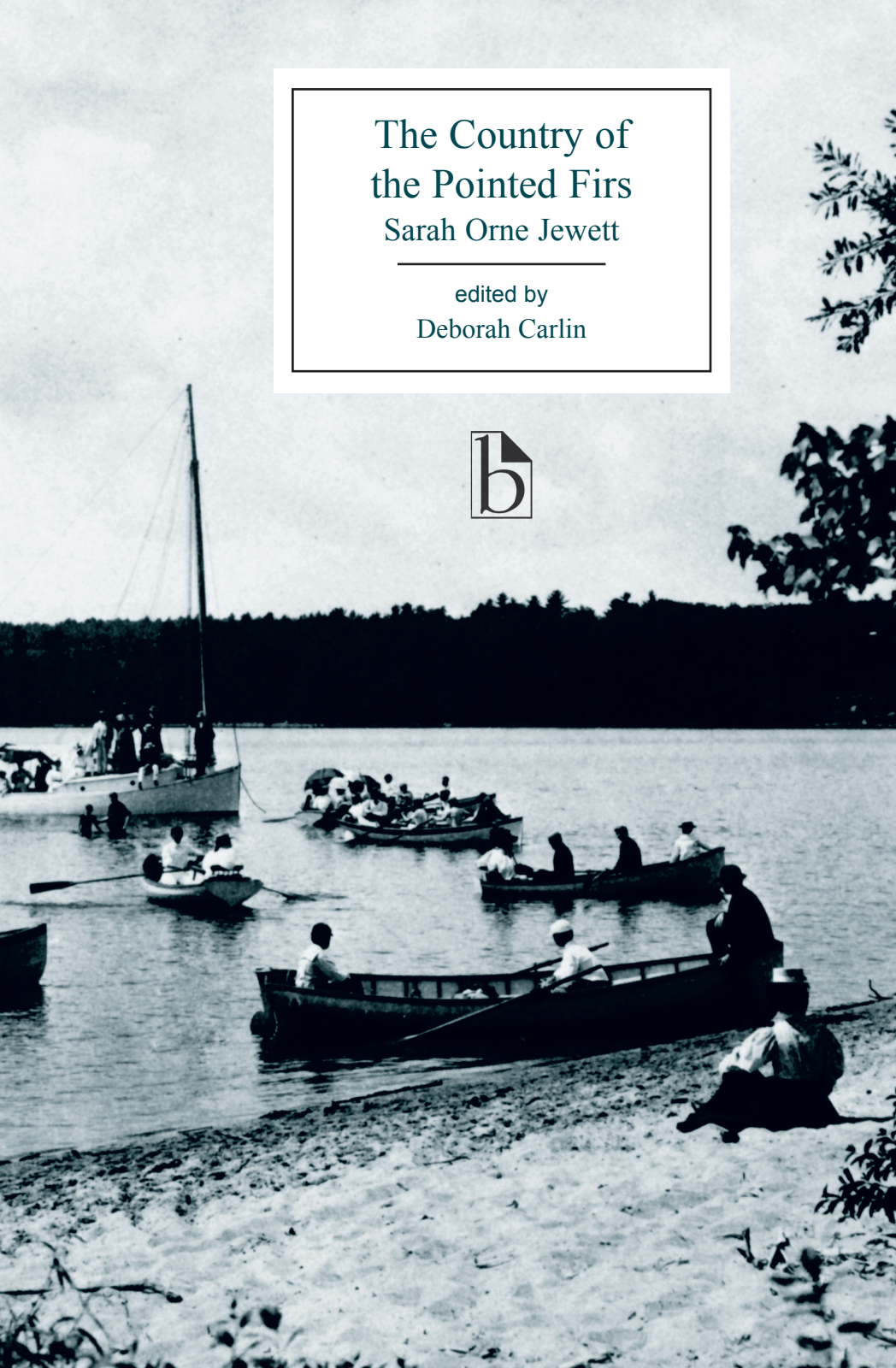
The Country of the Pointed Firs

Sarah Orne Jewett

edited by

Deborah Carlin



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A sharply observed, affectionate, and unsentimental portrait of life in a Maine fishing village, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is Sarah Orne Jewett's most enduring work, and commonly regarded as the finest example of American regionalist literature in the nineteenth century. This Broadview Edition is based on the 1896 Houghton Mifflin edition and also includes the four other stories set in Dunnet Landing.

The critical introduction situates the text in its historical, cultural, and literary milieu, attending to its place in Jewett's oeuvre and in her biography. Appendices include earlier "local color" writing by Jewett and others, Jewett's letters, and contemporary reviews of the novel.

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THE COUNTRY OF THE POINTED FIRS
and
THE DUNNET LANDING STORIES

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Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), from Samuel T. Pickard, *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907).

THE COUNTRY OF THE POINTED FIRS and THE DUNNET LANDING STORIES

Sarah Orne Jewett

edited by Deborah Carlin

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Introduction

> I am getting quite ambitious and really feel that writing is my work—my business perhaps.... I am glad to have something to do in the world and something which may prove very helpful and useful if I care to make it so, which I certainly do.
>
> —Sarah Orne Jewett to Horace Scudder, 1 July 1873
> (Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters,* 1967, 27-28)

Of the five novels, four children's books, ten short story collections, and over two hundred magazine and newspaper pieces she produced in a thirty-five year career, Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, originally published in four installments (January, March, July, and September) of *Atlantic Monthly* in 1896, is her most popular and enduring work. Praised by Henry James as a work of art that embodies "the palpable present *intimate* that throbs responsive" (qtd. in Bishop 264), extolled by Rudyard Kipling as "the reallest New England book ever given us" (qtd. in Blanchard 304), and declared by Willa Cather to be, along with *The Scarlet Letter* and *Huckleberry Finn*, one of the "three American books that have the possibility of a long, long life" (Cather 1: xix), *The Country of the Pointed Firs* remains an abidingly unique text in American literature.

Part of what makes *The Country of the Pointed Firs* unique—singular, exceptional, perhaps even anomalous—is that while Jewett's text is commonly regarded as the best and most successful example of local color or regionalist literature in the nineteenth century, it is nonetheless true that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* appears at the very end of this literary genre's popularity. Its publication heralds the historical demise of local color literature as a type of fiction that was highly esteemed and critically embraced in America, notwithstanding the novel's enduring reputation as *the* classic in this genre. Another of its unique features is its subject: a woman writer of indeterminate middle age sojourns in a Maine coastal village over the summer, but instead of charting the process of her declared work—the development of her own writing—what Jewett's fiction instead delineates is the evolution of her role as a *listener* to the tales of those predominantly elderly villagers with whom she interacts. Despite her role

as the narrator of this text, her development as a character depends almost solely on the growth of her discernment as a narratee. She is both teller of this tale—*The Country of the Pointed Firs*—and the sympathetic audience of the tales that compose this fiction simultaneously.

Also unique to this fascinating and complex text is the question of just what kind of fiction it is. Like Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a text that continued to expand over its forty years of subsequent editions through Whitman's additions of approximately two hundred poems, Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is also a text that changed three times during its publication history, gaining additional "chapters" in both its 1896 and its 1910 book editions, thus calling into serious question what its "definitive" text actually is. This plasticity of the text itself is also evident in difficulties most critics have had in categorizing its genre, evident in the continuing debate about whether or not it is more appropriate to label it a novel, a composite novel, a short story collection, a group of sketches, or a story cycle. That this question is still open to discussion suggests the essentially enigmatic nature of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, its unique ability to resist easy classification within operative critical modalities.

In her brilliant essay, "Sex, Class, and 'Category Crisis'" (1999), Marjorie Pryse refers to this pervasive quality of elusiveness in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as Jewett's "transitivity." Adapting this term from Eve Sedgwick's groundbreaking and influential work of queer theory, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Pryse argues that "transitivity" correctly identifies the qualities of "liminality and ... resistance to being confined" (40) that are present both in Jewett's life and in her fiction, and she suggests as well that perhaps the most efficacious strategy for reading and analyzing Jewett's work "is to argue for blurring and creating new categories of analysis" (32). In the sections that follow in this introduction, considerable attention will be paid to potentially productive incidences of such blurring as they occur in Jewett's life, in the definitions of local color and regionalism, in the various permutations of the text as additional chapters are added, and finally, in questions about to what genre *The Country of the Pointed Firs* most properly belongs, and why such distinctions matter. While it might seem at first counterintuitive to locate critical junctures of interpretation within spaces rendered hazy or indistinct because of blurring, ultimately, with Jewett and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the act of joining together and inte-

grating those elements and approaches that seem different may result in a much more complex and nuanced critical encounter, one not unlike both the subject and the experience of reading this intriguing text itself.

Jewett's Life and the Cultural Context of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

Jewett was careful throughout her career to insist to recalcitrant readers that Dunnet Landing was not a real place, and through this to reinforce the status of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as a work of fiction. In a letter from 23 January 1899 to a young admirer, Mary E. Mulholland, for instance, Jewett writes that

> I cannot tell you just where Dunnet Landing is except that it must be somewhere 'along shore' between the region of Tenants Harbor and Boothbay, or it might be farther to the eastward in a country that I know less well. It is not any real 'landing' or real 'harbor' but I am glad to think that you also know that beautiful stretch of seacoast country, and so we can feel when we think about it, as if we were neighbours. (Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 1967, 116)

Insistent as she is about the lack of the "real" in her creation of this village, Jewett also suggests the power of fiction to beguile and bedevil the line between fiction and reality when she exclaims that she is delighted to discover that Mulholland is "such a friend" of another fictional creation, Betty Leicester, and then admits "that she has always seemed to me to be a real person. And it is just the same way with Mrs. Todd" (Cary 116). While it is inappropriate and unproductive to suggest that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is an autobiographical work, the delicate lines between fiction and reality, between artistic creation and personal history, may be teased out to trace the sources for Jewett's most important and aesthetically satisfying work.

Elements of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* owe much to the influence of two important men in Jewett's life: her paternal grandfather, ship's captain Theodore Furber Jewett, and her father, Theodore Herman Jewett, a country doctor whom Jewett would immortalize in her 1884 novel. The second of three daughters, Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett was born in her paternal grandfather's home in South Berwick, Maine, on 3

September 1849. Though Captain Jewett built a Greek revival house next door for his son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters when Sarah was two or three, the young Jewett spent countless hours during her childhood listening both to his tales of seafaring adventures and to those of the other retired sea captains and their wives who were invited to his house to share their tales of voyages. Growing up in mid-century New England among these older generations, Jewett would have doubtless heard remembrances of a past that was substantively different from her present. She would have been privy to the tales of the disastrous economic effects of the Embargo Act of 1807, a series of laws passed by Congress during 1807 and 1808 that were designed to redress hostile attacks on American ships by both the British and French. These new laws stipulated that no American vessels could land in any foreign port unless authorized by the President (who was then Thomas Jefferson, in his second term of office), and that all US ships—including whalers and fishing vessels—had to post a bond twice the value of their ship and cargo. Effectively abolishing all foreign trade, the effect on New England shipping was swift and severe, resulting in significant unemployment and an economic depression from which the shipping industry never recovered. Prosperous merchants and sea captains found themselves without income and watched their ships rotting at the wharves. Though South Berwick as a town was not as devastated as some of its coastal neighbors, owing primarily to its proximity to forests and ability to continue the coastal shipping trade in lumber, those who depended on transatlantic sailing for their livelihood watched the life they had known fade away and vanish. These conditions persisted and were discussed throughout the nineteenth century; during the 1880s, for example, several essays in *The North American Review* addressed what was by then a long-standing decline of the New England shipping industry. In his 1881 article "Shall Americans Own Ships?" G.W. Sumner traces the rise of steam ships as replacements for sailing ships during the years between 1850 and 1860, and argues that "No doubt these changes in the conditions of the industry itself have been the chief cause of the decline in ship-building in this country," though he also insists that it "is a plain fact of history that the decline in ship-building began before the war and the high tariff" (560). Writing in 1884, Nelson Dingley, Jr. bases his analysis on the premise

"that the decline of the American merchant marine, which is deservedly attracting so much attention, is confined to shipping employed in the foreign trade" (313), the very trade that once formed the backbone of economic life among the sailing families in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and is much lamented and much remembered in the text itself. The influence of her grandfather's own nautical adventures and those she absorbed in the countless tales told at his dinner table can surely be cited as one of the sources for the aged seafarers, such as Elijah Tilley and Captain Littlepage, who people *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and for the avidity with which the narrator patiently listens to their tales and the sympathy with which she records Littlepage's lament that "shipping is a very great loss" in Chapter Seven. We can also locate in Jewett's childhood the tenderness with which the text recounts the ancient foreign artifacts that the denizens of Dunnet Landing treasure but are no longer able to bring home, such as the "West Indian curiosities, specimens of conch shells and fine coral" that decorate the home of the late Mrs. Begg in Chapter Four, or "the coral pin that Nathan Todd brought home to give to poor Joanna" that Mrs. Todd in turn bestows on the narrator as a parting gift in Chapter Twenty-One.

The shipping industry was not the only economic indicator of decline in nineteenth-century New England villages. Population loss, farmland exhaustion, and a lack of economic opportunities drove many young people out of their rural communities and toward industrializing towns and cities during the nineteenth century, a trend that Jewett both incorporates into her fictions and comments upon. In Chapter Four of *Deephaven*, for instance, the Widow Moses laments that her "misguided nephew" has left the village to resettle in Lynn, Massachusetts, a small city whose population grew exponentially after 1850 and attracted young workers into its shoe-making industry. Lynn also makes an appearance in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, when Mrs. Fosdick imparts to Mrs. Todd and the narrator the story of her sister, Louisa Dailey, who died in Lynn while visiting her daughter. As historian Hal S. Barron notes, such stories of familial diminishment were common in nineteenth-century New England:

> During the second half of the nineteenth century, urban periodicals such as *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Nation* often pub-

> lished articles that worried about "The Farmer's Changed Condition" and lamented "The Doom of the Small Town" and "The Passing of the Country Church," and Gilded Age spokesmen such as Josiah Strong[1] considered rural decay a pressing problem, equal to the challenge of the cities. (31)

In one of these articles, "The Doom of the Small Town," published in 1895, one year before *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Henry U. Fletcher decried the steady leak of vital human resources that weakened the social fabric of rural life:

> One by one, family by family, their inhabitants slip away in search of other homes; a steady but hardly perceptible emigration takes away the young, the hopeful, the ambitious. There remain behind the superannuated, the feeble.... Enough workers remain to till the soil, to manage the distribution of food and clothing, and to transact the common business of life; but the world's real work is done elsewhere. (214)

Peopled as they are almost exclusively with elderly men and women, Jewett's stories and longer fictions register with sensitivity this changing demographic in New England society. In a letter written one year after the publication of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* to her friend Sarah Wyman Whitman, Jewett wrote that she felt most deeply connected to the generations that had preceded her, and that it was to them that "I really belong—I who was brought up with grandfathers and grand uncles and aunts for my best playmates" (qtd. in Blanchard 303).[2] Jewett's acknowledged affiliation with this elderly generation is fully elaborated in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* through the narrator's deep affection for the society of old folks who inhabit the village and compose its essential character.

If her relationship with her grandfather and his peers shaped much of the context of character and setting in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, it is Jewett's father who contributed much to the construction of the empathic narrator for whom listening itself

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1 Protestant clergyman Josiah Strong (1847-1916) is best known for his founding of the social gospel movement, designed to help alleviate the ills brought on by urban industrialization and immigration through religious tenets and practices.

2 See Blanchard (39-40) and Silverthorne (31-33) for fuller accounts of Jewett's childhood relations with elderly friends and neighbors.

becomes an art. Educated in medicine at Bowdoin College in Maine and at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Theodore H. Jewett aspired to practice in a city where he would have access to the best facilities and sharpest colleagues, but the entreaty of his father to live in South Berwick after the death of one son (Theodore's brother), soon followed by the death of another, fixed his fate as the rural physician his daughter would recreate as Dr. Leslie in her 1884 novel, *A Country Doctor*. Theodore Jewett not only shared his passionate love of books with his equally bookish daughter, but he allowed her to accompany him on rounds as he drove across the countryside ministering to the ill and the infirm. Along the journeys he taught Sarah about the flora and fauna they observed, as well as about the healing properties of various plants and herbs, a defining element of Almira Todd's character in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. But perhaps the greatest gift he gave his daughter was himself as a model for how to interact with others. Noted for his tact and understanding of people (Blanchard 24), Theodore Jewett embodied compassion, wisdom, and sympathy with the quality of careful, and sometimes even humorous observation, and in emulating him the young Sarah developed the social persona that would eventually transform itself into the narrative persona of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, a woman for whom the pleasures of listening, visiting, and observation are manifold and deep. As Jewett herself matured into the writer she would become, and as she began to compose her "sketches of country life," it was to her father that she inevitably returned, recalling "again and again the wise things he said, and the sights he made me see" (7).

That she chose the career of writer for her narrator in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is also significant autobiographically because Jewett began to fashion herself as an author from her late teens and never deviated from this chosen path. She wrote sporadically in a diary from 1867 to 1869, composed lengthy and amusing letters to friends, and kept a commonplace book of favorite quotations from her vast reading. At the young age of eighteen she published her first story, "Jenny Garrow's Lovers," in a Boston weekly, *The Flag of Our Union*, under the pen name of A.C. Eliot, and in 1869 she had her story, "Mr. Bruce," accepted by *Atlantic Monthly*, for which she earned the sum of fifty dollars. Encouraged by this small success, Jewett then sent in her first fiction about a Maine fishing village, a story entitled "The Shore House." After taking to heart *Atlantic Monthly* associate editor William Dean Howells's suggestions for revision, it

too was accepted for publication, though it did not appear until September 1873 due to backlog. After assuming the editorship of *Atlantic Monthly* in 1871, Howells continued to publish Jewett's stories—"Deephaven Cronies" (1875) and "Deephaven Excursions" (1876)—which would culminate in her 1877 publication of related sketches, *Deephaven*, an important precursor to *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

Deephaven chronicles the adventures of two young women from the city, the narrator Helen Denis and her friend Kate Lancaster, who, like the unnamed narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, spend the summer in a small fishing village. During their stay they encounter sea captains, fishermen, and some warm and wise old women, all of whom relate stories that the young women absorb and are ultimately transformed by. Such summer visitors to the Maine coastal towns were a recent phenomenon that did not go unnoticed by the young Jewett herself:

> When I was, perhaps, fifteen, the first 'city boarders' began to make their appearance near Berwick; and the way they misconstrued the country people and made game of their peculiarities fired me with indignation. I determined to teach the world that country people were not the awkward, ignorant set these persons seemed to think. I wanted the world to know their grand, simple lives; and so far as I had a mission, when I first began to write, I think that was it. (Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 1956, 19-20)

What Jewett characterizes as a "mission" is, in fact, *the* determining characteristic of her fiction: portraits of rural Maine villagers and village life conveyed with a sympathetic heart, a sharp eye for evocative details that convey the essence of character, and a wise and generous perspective that is sometimes humorous and yet always respectful. *Deephaven* is also notable for marking the beginning of Jewett's ability to capture the unique speech of regional dialect in fiction, as Howells himself noted when he praised one of her early *Deephaven* sketches in 1875: "You've got an uncommon feeling for *talk*—I *hear* your people" (qtd. in Blanchard 59). Thus, in her first substantive fiction, Jewett is already well on her way toward establishing what will be both her subject and her approach to writing. "Don't try to write *about* people and things, just tell them as they are!" (Jewett 6), her father had counseled; this advice, coupled with her desire to represent accurately and respectfully the "grand, simple lives" of rural, Northeastern

country people, situated Jewett's developing fictional art within the traditions both of realism and of local color that dominated the American literary scene after 1865.

The rise of local color literature was especially prominent in the two decades following the Civil War, and most critics attribute its origins as a genre in periodical literature to the national popularity of Bret Harte's 1867 *The Luck of Roaring Camp*. Nor can the powerful role that William Dean Howells played in its propagation be underestimated. As the editor of both *Atlantic Monthly* (1871-81) and *Harper's* (1886-92), the two most respected and influential periodicals of their day, Howells actively promoted both the idea of local color as well as the writers who worked within this genre, including Sarah Orne Jewett. Recalling his role in her career in an essay entitled "Recollections of an Atlantic Editorship," in the November 1907 edition of *Atlantic Monthly*, Howells referred to Jewett's fiction as those

> incomparable sketches of New England character [that] began to appear well within my assistant-editorship ... and it was merely my good luck to be the means of encouraging them in the free movement, unfettered by the limits of plot, and keeping only to the reality, which no other eye than hers has seen so subtly, so humorously, so touchingly. (*Criticism and Fiction* 194)

The "reality" to which Howells refers speaks of the attention local color literature pays to the distinctive speech, customs, and habitat of different regions in the United States. Howells, in fact, argued vociferously throughout his career as an editor and literary mentor that the United States was too enormous and too diverse a subject to be encompassed by any single writer or any unitary version of "American" experience:

> To put it paradoxically, our life is too large for our art to be broad. In despair at the immense scope and variety of the material offered it by American civilization, American fiction must specialize, and, turning distracted from the superabundance of character, it must burrow far down in a soul or two. (*Heroines of Fiction* 2: 261)

Local color literature's tendency to "specialize," in Howells's words, highlights its historical role as a mediator in, as well as the embodiment of, the sense of change and loss that characterized

an increasingly modern life in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the United States. Rapid industrialization and the mounting dominance of corporations in the country's economy, exponential growth in the railroad and communications industries, massive waves of immigration that altered the literal look of Americans in both cities and villages, and the relocation of population centers from rural locations to urban ones, all contributed to a national sense of psychic dislocation, fragmentation, and rootlessness that local color literature both mirrored and redressed. Local color literature represented difference itself on a national level, stressing those characteristics of region that seemed foreign in their very particularity. In this way, it brought diversity to the foreground of national consciousness and underscored the fact that difference was, for better or worse, the current condition of American life. Yet even as it embodied national variation, local color literature also seemed to offer an alternative world far different from the one shaped by the technological and economic pressures of an encroaching modernism. With what Eric J. Sundquist describes as its "sparsely populated, flawlessly sketched landscapes" (508), local color writing created an "aura of timelessness and irrevocable decay.... the record of time's passage left when a simpler way of life succumbs to one more complex" (508-09). These nostalgic literary evocations of pre-Civil War interconnected and manageable communities, ones with clearly defined social categories and relations, undoubtedly contributed to local color's popularity from the 1870s through the 1890s, especially insofar as they ameliorated imaginatively the sense of loss that characterized this historical period.

If local color fictions memorialize the loss of a pre-industrial, communal life, in those fictions specific to New England, as Sundquist notes, "memory is often lodged in the vestiges of a world of female domesticity" (509), a world that characterizes Sarah Orne Jewett's actual life as well as that of her artistic production. Many critics[1] have noted not only the female-centric nature of Jewett's fiction, but also the fact that the vast majority of women in her stories—both young and old—remain unmarried, marking Jewett as a writer who represents "intimacies and devotions that do not follow heterosexual scripts" (Howard 8). Jewett's own life mirrors this distinctive homosocial emphasis.

1 See in particular essays by Judith Fetterley, Barbara A. Johns, Marjorie Pryse ("Archives of Female Friendship and the 'Way' Jewett Wrote"), and Patti Capel Schwartz.

Beginning in her youth and extending throughout her adulthood, Jewett was an active participant in an expanding circle of intense and companionate female friends, among them

> Edith Haven Doe, a married woman living a mile away who spent time with all of the Jewett girls; Kate Birkhead of Newport, Rhode Island, one of several early "crushes" and the model for Kate Lancaster in *Deephaven*; Lily Munger, daughter of a Maine clergyman, younger than Jewett and a recipient of a number of rather didactic letters during the late 1870s; and, most important, Annie Fields, who was her close companion from the early 1880s on. (Howard 6)

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, in her groundbreaking 1975 essay, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," places these intense, and often passionate, homosocial relationships within the historical context of "gender-role differentiation within the family and within society as a whole" and thus what she argues becomes an "emotional segregation of women and men" throughout the late nineteenth century (60). Contending that same-sex "supportive networks were institutionalized in social conventions or rituals that accompanied virtually every important event in a woman's life, from birth to death," Smith-Rosenberg concludes that, as a direct consequence, "devotion to and love of other women became a plausible and socially accepted form of human interaction" (60).[1]

Sarah Orne Jewett spent the majority of her adult life in what was then termed a "Boston marriage" with Annie Fields, the widow of noted American publisher James T. Fields. Boston marriages were a common and socially accepted construction of female relationships. According to feminist historian, Lillian Faderman, the term described

> a long-term monogamous relationship between two otherwise unmarried women. The women were generally independent of men, either through inheritance or because of a career.... Whether these unions sometimes or often included sex we will never know, but we do know that these women spent their lives primarily with other women, they gave to other women the bulk of their energy and attention, and they formed powerful emotional ties with other women. (190)

1 For an account of such instances of female love and devotion in Jewett's life, see Donovan, "The Unpublished Love Poems of Sarah Orne Jewett."

While most Jewett biographers speculate that Jewett met Annie Fields sometime during the 1870s, we know for certain that both attended a reception in December 1879 honoring Oliver Wendell Holmes. Annie's husband, James, was one of the founders of the Boston publishing house Ticknor and Fields, a firm that eventually turned into the contemporary publishing company of Houghton Mifflin. He also served for ten years (1861-71) as the editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, and, together with his wife, championed a number of important women writers of the time, including Louisa May Alcott, Rebecca Harding Davis, Harriet Beecher Stowe, poet Celia Thaxter, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Annie Fields also helped to establish their home at 148 Charles Street in Boston as America's premier literary salon, hosting such eminent authors as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Matthew Arnold. Seventeen years older than his wife, James, who had suffered ill health during the 1870s, died in 1881. Though Jewett had already begun to socialize with the Fields in 1880, James's death led to an intensification of their relationship, in part because Jewett's own grief at the loss of her father in 1878 was still fresh, and this shared experience of bereavement forged an immediate sympathy between the two women. In 1882 they embarked on the first of their four trips to Europe and began to build a life together.

Despite the fifteen-year difference in their ages, Fields and Jewett shared similar characteristics that made them a companionable match. They were intelligent, independent, committed to literature and the arts, open to life's offerings and capable of enjoying its delights, and deeply attached to one another and to other people in their circle of family, friends, and literary acquaintances. They lived together during winters at Fields's house in Boston and summers at her residence in Manchester-by-the-Sea; in spring and fall Jewett often returned to South Berwick, Maine, to work in solitude on her writing. They corresponded frequently during these separations, with Fields serving as a critic and editor of Jewett's work. At 148 Charles Street, Jewett and Fields continued the literary salon that Annie had established with her husband, and together they invited a number of women writers at the beginning of their careers, such as Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Willa Cather, and Edith Wharton. The centrality of this twenty-seven

year relationship,[1] along with the stability and continuity it brought to Jewett's life, forms the backdrop of the female world in which Jewett produced her uniquely woman-centered fictions, including the matriarchal world of the indomitable Mrs. Todd and the gentle Mrs. Blackett in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

Jewett spent much of her life not only traveling abroad with Fields, but alternating between the urban and sophisticated world of Boston and her rural Maine home, much like the narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* who leaves the city for the village retreat of Dunnet Landing where she hopes to write. Jewett published novels and stories consistently throughout her life every two or three years, and in 1901 she was honored as the first woman to receive a Litt.D. degree from Maine's Bowdoin College. But her writing career came to an untimely and tragic halt with a life-changing accident she suffered in 1902. Ironically, on the day of her fifty-third birthday, Jewett took some friends for a carriage ride on a route that she had traveled frequently. While descending a hill her horse slipped on some loose stones and Sarah was thrown from the carriage, severely injuring her head, neck, and spine. For months she was bedridden, unable to rise due to terrible headaches and bouts of extreme dizziness. Though she was able to read and write letters lying down, she found herself unable to work at her desk, a condition that foreclosed her lifelong habit of fiction writing. Visits from friends sustained her during her invalidism, and by 1904 she was able to return to Annie Fields's house on Charles Street, where she would meet and profoundly influence Willa Cather in 1908. Jewett wrote two letters to Cather in November and December 1908 (see Appendix C4, C5) that not only offered advice to the aspiring novelist, but that also reiterated Jewett's conception of the artist as, paradoxically, a solitary figure who must never ignore what is true and deep about the life she represents, and who, above all else, "must write to the human heart." A year later, at the age of fifty-nine, Sarah Orne Jewett died of a cerebral hemorrhage while at her home in South Berwick.

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1 For fuller accounts of the relationship between Jewett and Fields and of Fields's life generally, see Blanchard (125-35, 147-60), Donovan (*New England Local Color Literature* 38-49), Fryer, Roman, Sherman (46-90), and Silverthorne (103-19).

Publication History and the Question of Genre

Marjorie Pryse has characterized Jewett as "a storyteller whose lack of plot defies genre if not form" (40), and the question of how to classify the text that is *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is one that remains open to critical debate, in part because the text itself has never been a consistently stable entity throughout its publication history. When Jewett first published *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in four installments in the 1896 *Atlantic Monthly*, the text ended with Chapter Nineteen, "The Feast's End," in which the narrator, Almira Todd, and Mrs. Blackett travel back from the Bowden reunion, talking over the day's festivities. While this chapter certainly does have the sense of an ending—the hint of mortality voiced by Mrs. Blackett when she notes that she expected to see a few more relatives there, the narrator's hope that she will grow to be like Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett in their calm acceptance of age, and the companionable laugh all three women share at a singer out of tune which ends the chapter—Jewett added two new chapters to the 1896 Houghton Mifflin edition upon which this Broadview edition is based: Chapter Twenty, "Along Shore," and Chapter Twenty-One, "The Backward View." The addition of these two chapters amplifies and extends the sense of loss and of leave-taking in the text. In "Along Shore," the narrator spends an afternoon with the aged fisherman, Elijah Tilley, whose imaginative life revolves around memories of his wife, "poor dear" Sarah, who died eight years previous to his afternoon with the narrator. This chapter also recalls the narrator's interaction with another elderly sailor in Chapters Five through Seven, one who is also imprisoned by his memories of the past, Captain Littlepage. This mirroring effect is increased in the final chapter, "The Backward View," which harkens back to the text's opening, "The Return." In both chapters the narrator's relation to Dunnet Landing is bound by the boat that brings her to port and that carries her away from the friends and relations she has come to love and admire throughout the summer. This final chapter also enhances the sense of loss so poignantly rendered in the narrator's observation of Tilley's muted grief for his absent wife, as the narrator herself must take leave of Mrs. Todd, whose gruff demeanor at the narrator's departure is an attempt to contain her own heartbreak, and whose affection is instead communicated through the gifts she leaves the narrator in place of a verbal good-bye. These two chapters, in effect, serve to bookend and to contain the text, sig-

naling its end by repeating motifs that draw the narrative into its own self-referential conclusion. Indeed, I believe that most readers would concur that after reading Chapters Twenty and Twenty-One, the first "ending" of these tales in Chapter Nineteen as they appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* would feel somewhat abrupt and unfinished.

The imaginative richness of this locale and of these characters inspired Jewett's return to them three years after the publication of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896. In 1899, Jewett included two new Dunnet Landing tales—"The Queen's Twin" and "A Dunnet Shepherdess"—in her collection *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories*. The title story of the collection centers upon one of those Dunnet Landing "characters," a woman named Abby Martin, who reveres the memory of Queen Victoria through her identification with her as her twin, owing to the common birthday that they share. A gently comic tale, the story evokes something of the intensity of Captain Littlepage's absorption in his own imaginative realm, for Abby Martin is equally defined by the world of royal affiliation she has created and preserved throughout her lifetime. The second of these stories, "A Dunnet Shepherdess," enlarges the character of William Blackett, Almira Todd's shy and sensitive brother, as he courts the shepherdess Esther Hight, a woman whose quiet grace and easy affinity with the natural world makes her a well-chosen companion for the gentle William.

Jewett published a third Dunnet Landing story in the August edition of *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900 entitled "The Foreigner." A dark tale, like that of "Poor Joanna" in Chapter Thirteen of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and one also told at night during a storm, "The Foreigner" too speaks to the condition of female exile, in this tale, one that is imposed by the community as much as by the woman herself, who is never accepted into the life of Dunnet Landing due to her French "foreignness" and her Catholic religion. Jewett penned one final Dunnet Landing tale, "William's Wedding," left unfinished at her death, in which William Blackett and Esther Hight are married. This tale, in some ways, completes the story of courtship introduced in "A Dunnet Shepherdess," and was published posthumously in *Atlantic Monthly* in August 1910.

The version of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* published in 1896 and reprinted in 1899, which consists of twenty-one chapters, was *the* authoritative text until 1910, when Mary R. Jewett, Sarah's sister, copyrighted a Houghton Mifflin edition in which

"A Dunnet Shepherdess," "William's Wedding," and "The Queen's Twin" were inserted into the text between what was then Chapter Twenty, "Along Shore" and Chapter Twenty-One, "The Backward View."[1] In 1925, Willa Cather compiled the Mayflower edition of *The Best Short Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett* and kept these three additional stories as part of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, though she reversed their order, placing "The Queen's Twin" second and "William's Wedding" third. Cather's edition re-mained the standard one throughout much of the twentieth century, though recent paperback editions (Penguin, 1995 and Oxford, 1996) have restored the text to its 1896 format and have appended the later Dunnet Landing stories, including "The Foreigner," which never made it into any of the published versions as a chapter in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.[2]

We have then, as readers, inherited two substantially different versions of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* during the last one hundred years with little sense of which of them is *the* definitive version. Critic Marco Portales's extremely thorough research into the correspondence between Jewett and her publishing house has located not a single directive suggesting that Jewett had any intention of including any of the later Dunnet Landing stories into a revised edition of the original version published in 1896. Moreover, as Portales logically argues, Jewett had ample time and, more importantly, energy between the publication of three of the Dunnet Landing stories in 1899 and 1900 and her life-altering 1902 accident to have effected such textual changes to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* if she actually intended to make them. That she did not suggests that the version of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that includes extra stories was published

1 Many critics (notably Portales and Howard) have taken the lead of Warner Berthoff's brilliant and elegant essay, "The Art of Jewett's Pointed Firs," published in the 1959 *New England Quarterly*, in which he states that only two of the Dunnet Landing stories, "A Dunnet Shepherdess" and "William's Wedding," were added to the 1896 version. However, the 1910 Mary R. Jewett Houghton Mifflin edition housed in the Smith College Rare Book Room contains *three* inserted stories (including "The Queen's Twin"), not two, leading me to believe that Berthoff may have erred in his 1959 account, unquestioned by subsequent critics.

2 David Bonnell Green in his 1962 edition, *The World of Dunnet Landing: A Sarah Orne Jewett Collection* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P) was the first to make the case for the inclusion of "The Foreigner" among the Dunnet Landing tales.

without the permission or, it would seem, the intention of their author. If authorial intentionality seems to favor the 1896 version, so too, to my mind at least, does aesthetic coherence. I agree with Berthoff that the three inserted stories "definitely interrupt—coming as they now do just before the closing chapter—the poignant falling rhythm of the original work" (41). The subtle arc of loss that pervades the end of the Bowden reunion, with its absent relatives, the tenderness of Elijah Tilley as he reminisces about his lost love, and the impending, then actual separation of the narrator from her beloved Mrs. Todd in the final chapter, all underscore the persistent tension in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* between the vital, lively, and poignant present of human interaction and the ability of storytelling to capture life in the continuous present of artistic representation. Even as the world of Dunnet Landing is "lost to sight" in the text's final words, its world is preserved and never lost in the text that remains, those stories of life conveyed by the narrator who is, after all, a writer, in the medium that we finally witness her practice as we hold this text in our hands.

How appropriate it is to categorize *The Country of the Pointed Firs* within the genre of fiction is an issue as open to interpretation as its fragmented publication history. Variously described by critics throughout the decades as sketches, stories, a story sequence, a story cycle, a paranovel, a composite novel, and a novel itself, the text has been notoriously difficult to define as a specific kind of fiction. Indeed, as Richard Cary notes, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is more immediately described by what it *doesn't* do within the realm of conventional narrative:

> There is no impelling plot with conflict, climax and dénouement. Incident is sparse and passive, and this lack has betrayed many commentators into dismissing the structure as merely episodic, as a series of cameos, as anecdotes sewn together by a thin thread, as a scaffolding of narrative, or as charmingly subdued vignettes. (*Sarah Orne Jewett* 149)

Jewett herself inadvertently contributed to the critical presumption that her work lacks a solid foundation in narrative art when she wrote in 1873 to editor Horace Scudder that

> I have no dramatic talent.... It seems to me I can furnish the theatre, and show you the actors, and the scenery, and the audience, but there is never any play!... I am certain I could

> not write one of the usual magazine stories. If the editors will take the sketchy kind and people like to read them, is not it as well to do that and do it successfully as to make hopeless efforts to achieve something in another line which runs much higher? (*Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 1967, 29, 30)

With the self-deprecating remark that her stories are "sketchy," Jewett, perhaps predictably at this early juncture in her writing career, seems to suggest that she is not aiming for "something higher" and more difficult within fiction than the brevity and one-dimensionality often associated with fictional sketches that lack plot and complex characterization. Most literary critics have rejected this radically limited view of Jewett's narrative compositions; rather, she has been praised for her mastery of style, even when her subjects have been relegated to the "minor" movements of local color and regionalism.[1] Yet a persistent sketchiness within criticism has remained regarding the question of how to properly categorize the genre of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, and it is worth investigating the issue since it is difficult to discuss and evaluate the work if there is no vocabulary of form through which to discuss its content.

We can begin by stating unequivocally that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* cannot be characterized as a collection of short stories since it obviously has a protagonist (the narrator/writer) who links the various chapters devoted to recording the visiting and listening to the folk of Dunnet Landing with whom she comes in contact. These are clearly not separate stories loosely gathered into a single collection, unlike Jewett's earlier story collections, *A White Heron and Other Stories* (1886) or *A Native of Winby and Other Tales* (1893), which signal their genre by the telling words, "and Other." These titles make no claim of the interrelatedness of their stories with one another, and thus can be regarded as a collection of distinctly singular stories that share no common narrator, characters, or sequence of events.

Yet early critics were not at all comfortable labeling the text a novel either. As early as 1929, the great American critic, F.O. Matthiessen, argued in his monograph about Jewett that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* was definitely *not* a novel (101). Richard Cary, the author of his own study of Jewett and the

1 For balanced and thorough summaries of the history of critical approaches to Jewett and her work, see Nagel, Howard, and Kilcup and Edwards.

editor of her letters, concurs, stating that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* lacks "important elements customarily expected in a novel" (*Sarah Orne Jewett* 131). Yet one of the difficulties with this argument is that the definition of a novel is loose and open to any variety of configurations. Almost all definitions agree that a novel must have some heft and girth to it; it is an *extended* fictional narrative conveyed in prose. Most critics also grant that there must be some organizing principle in the text—be it plot, theme, or idea—for the text to claim legitimacy as a novel. There is also a general consensus that novels require the development of characters through events or actions that are determined by plot, which is nothing less than the design and the ordering of events in a narrative. It is this final component in the formula of the novel that has given critics pause, for by her own admission, Jewett had difficulty constructing plots, and though one can discern a pattern in the narrator's visits to outlying farms and islands and her return to the home of Mrs. Todd,[1] it is tricky to characterize this pattern as a plot, so seemingly loose and haphazard is its non-linear structure. Yet it is also true that novels can concentrate on the growth and development of character to the near exclusion of plot, and it is this aspect of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that critic Paul D. Voelker explores in his persuasive reading of the text as a novel based on the development of the narrator in relation to Mrs. Todd and to the community in which she increasingly participates and comes to understand with both empathy and respect. Voelker's argument originates from his desire that the text attain "the stature of a novel" (239), and not be relegated to what he regards as the lesser categories of sketches or stories or to the category of paranovel, a subsidiary and irregular version of the novel itself.

The most recent critical formulation applied to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that reframes both the question of genre and of its place in a literary hierarchy is that of story cycles or sequences, a hybrid category located between stories and the novel. Differing from the novel and its "extended narrative with a primary central character and a main plot that extends from beginning to end," story cycles, according to critic James Nagel, are "linked to each other by consistent elements, whether ongoing characters, places, or situations.... each narra-

1 Elizabeth Ammons adroitly characterizes this pattern as one that "constantly moves out from its base to a given point and back again, out to another point and back again, out again, back again, and so forth, like arteries on a spider web" (52).

tive having its own resolution and yet building in some way on the others" (5). Nagel traces the origin of this form to the Greek Cyclic Poets, through the European Middle Ages in Boccacio's *The Decameron* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and into American literature beginning in 1820 with the publication of Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book*. According to both Nagel and J. Gerald Kennedy—who coined the related term, story sequence—this form of fiction flourished within local color since regionalism "may have given the first impetus to organized story collections or sequences, for the representation of a specific community demanded the collection of discrete narratives that implied local commonalities" (Kennedy 168). Yet though *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is regularly included in accounts of story cycles and story sequences, it lacks what critic Susan Garland Mann identifies as the "one essential characteristic of the short story cycle: the stories are both self-sufficient and interrelated" (15). It is this necessary quality of self-sufficiency that creates impediments when trying to place *The Country of the Pointed Firs* into the genre of story cycles, for none of the chapters in the book itself or even the Dunnet Landing tales that have existed outside the text as auxiliary fictions can be read as "self-sufficient" short stories. They all, in some way, depend upon the context of the whole for their richest and most complex meanings to emerge. None of them, for example, can function as a separate short story such as Jewett's "A White Heron," "The Flight of Betsey Lane," or "The Dulham Ladies," each of which has its own separate plot, cast of characters and, most importantly, a resolution of the plot within the frame of the story itself. Conversely, none of the chapters in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* can be extracted successfully as a separate short story because each is entirely dependent upon the context of the growing relationship of the narrator to Mrs. Todd and to the community of Dunnet Landing. This is to say that all of the chapters in the text and those four that have been appended to it are inextricably interrelated in terms both of theme and, even more importantly, in terms of sequence, as in the narrative concerning the exchange between the narrator and Captain Littlepage that extends from Chapters Four through Six. It is this quality of interdependence in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that leads Kennedy to conclude that the text is "a composite novel rather than a story sequence" (171).

A further refinement of the distinctions between story cycles and the novel, the category "composite novel," coined by Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris in 1995, denotes "a literary work composed of shorter texts that—though individually complete and autonomous—are interrelated in a coherent whole according to one or more organizing principles" (2). Dunn and Morris argue that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is "the quintessential example of a composite novel organized in the village sketch tradition" (36), basing their reading of the text's organization on a frame structure (consisting of the first and final two stories) into which "Jewett places a series of four self-contained episodes—each involving a visit—which develop a thematic counterpoint between isolation and community" (37). Again, the potential problem with this generic designation is its insistence that the episodes into which they separate *The Country of the Pointed Firs* are, in fact, autonomous. One easy test is for the reader to ask herself if the grouping of chapters that Dunn and Morris identify as "episodes" can be read apart from the entire text and, if so, to identify what is lost and what is gained in the splitting of the text into these discrete sets. Are these episodes, as Dunn and Morris argue, "individually complete," or does the process of abstraction alter them in some fundamental way that affects the integrity of the text? In other words, one needs to identify just what it is that constitutes the "composite" nature of this novel, a question that remains open to debate within Jewett studies.

The ability of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* to elude easy classification within the genre of fiction testifies to both its unique vision and its singular form. In charting the journey of the narrator from self to community, in delineating the isolation and the connectedness of people not as opposites but as contiguous states of human experience, in representing the ability of characters to absorb loss and yet live in the present, and in arguing for the power of stories to explain, amplify, deepen, and to capture the mystery of the human heart, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* makes its own, quiet case for inclusion in those works of American literature that continue to be read, relished, and returned to again and again. It is a work of fiction reflective of its historical time and yet also timeless, taking us to a place that seems, paradoxically, both real and otherworldly, leaving us with the sense that we have deeply experienced something difficult to put into words and as hard to grasp as the dreams from which we awaken.

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Sarah Orne Jewett: A Brief Chronology

1849 Theodora Sarah Orne Jewett is born on September 3 in South Berwick, Maine to Theodore H. Jewett, a doctor, and Caroline Frances Perry Jewett; she is the second of three daughters and her first name is soon dropped from family use. She is raised in the house of her paternal grandfather, sea captain Theodore Furber Jewett, along with his wife, grown son, William, and several servants. She grows up exposed to the tales of sailors and ship captains who come to dine with her grandfather.

1855 Sarah begins her formal education at the Miss Raynes' Dame School; she is a less than avid student, much given to daydreaming. Her younger sister, Caroline Augusta, is born on December 13.

1856 Sarah's father begins to take his daughter, who is afflicted with chronic childhood arthritis (diagnosed as rheumatism), with him on his daily rounds to see patients. He teaches her the names of birds, animals, and flowers and introduces her to the uses of basic medicinal herbs.

1861 Twelve-year-old Sarah enters Berwick Academy; her elder sister, Mary, has been a student there for two years. Her parents, both avid readers, introduce her to literature; she begins reading Laurence Sterne, Cervantes, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Gaskell.

1863 She reads Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, a book which, as an adult, she singles out as being the most influential in her youth because it details the life of the rural country people whom she knows well from her own experience.

1865 Graduates from Berwick Academy and ends her formal education.

1868 Publishes her first story, "Jenny Garrow's Lovers," under the pseudonym A.C. Eliot in *The Flag of Our Union* on January 18. She is taken on trips to Canada and to Cincinnati, Ohio.

1869 Sarah and Mary visit relatives in Boston and develop a circle of friends there. Her first story for *Atlantic*

Monthly, "Mr. Bruce," is accepted by its editor, William Dean Howells, and appears in November; she is paid fifty dollars for it.

1877 Publication of *Deephaven*, a collection of related stories about village life in southern Maine.

1878 Jewett's beloved father dies of a sudden heart attack on September 19 while he is at the Crawford House in the White Mountains of New Hampshire with his wife and eldest daughter, Mary. Sarah receives the news by telegram.

1879 Reworks some early stories and publishes them as *Old Friends and New.* On December 3, she is invited to a reception given by *Atlantic Monthly* to honor Oliver Wendell Holmes, an event also attended by publisher James T. Fields and his wife, Annie Adams Fields.

1880 Begins a lifelong relationship with Annie Adams Fields.

1881 James T. Fields dies in April. Sarah's recent loss of her father forges a deep connection with Annie Fields, and the two women spend significant time together at Annie Fields's Boston home at 148 Charles Street and at her cottage at Manchester-by-the-Sea. Jewett publishes a collection of familiar essays, *Country By-Ways*, five of which discuss her rambles in South Berwick, Maine.

1882 Takes her first trip to Europe with Annie Fields; they visit England, Ireland, Norway, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy.

1884 Jewett publishes the novel *A Country Doctor*, whose protagonist, Dr. Leslie, is modeled after her father.

1885 Jewett publishes the novel *A Marsh Island*.

1886 Nine Jewett stories are published as the collection *A White Heron and Other Stories*.

1888 Both Sarah and Annie are ill and decide to convalesce in Florida; they stay at the Hotel Ponce de Leon in St. Augustine. Another collection of stories, *The King of Folly Island and Other People*, is published.

1889 In July, Jewett accepts an invitation by Alice Longfellow to visit Mouse Island in Boothbay Harbor. Her visit to this area serves as the inspiration and setting for *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

1890 Jewett publishes three books: *Tales of New England*, *Betty Leicester: A Story for Girls*, and *Strangers and Wayfarers*.

1891 Jewett's mother, Caroline Frances Perry Jewett, dies on October 21 after a protracted illness.

1892 In February, Jewett and Fields embark on a second European trip, visiting Italy, France, and England.

1893 Jewett attends the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago at the behest of *Scribner's Magazine*, who commissions a patriotic essay about the event. Jewett publishes *A Native of Winby and Other Tales*.

1895 Jewett publishes another collection of stories, *The Life of Nancy*. In late spring she accepts an invitation from Thomas Bailey Aldrich and his wife to join them at a summer cottage at Tenants Harbor on the eastern shore of Maine. Two months later, Jewett returns with Fields and rents a small cottage, The Anchorage, in Martinsville, where she develops the story line for *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

1896 In January, Jewett and Fields sail on the yacht *Hermione* for a two-month cruise in the Caribbean. *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is serialized in the January through September issues of *Atlantic Monthly*, and is published later that year as a book to wide acclaim.

1897 Death of Jewett's younger sister, Caroline Jewett Eastman.

1898 Jewett and Fields take a third trip to Europe, traveling to France and England; while there they meet Rudyard Kipling and Henry James.

1899 Jewett writes and publishes the Dunnet Landing stories "The Queen's Twin" and "A Dunnet Shepherdess" in the February and December issues of *Atlantic Monthly*. These two stories appear in the collection, *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories*, published in the same year.

1900 Takes a fourth trip to Europe with Fields where they visit Italy, Greece, Turkey, and France. A third Dunnet Landing Story, "The Foreigner," is published in the August issue of *Atlantic Monthly*.

1901 Jewett publishes an historical romance, *The Tory Lover*. She is the first woman to receive an honorary Litt.D. degree from Bowdoin College.

1902 On September 3, her fifty-fifth birthday, Jewett's carriage horse stumbles on a stone and falls, throwing Jewett from the carriage and injuring her head and spine. Though she continues to write letters, she is seriously incapacitated for the remainder of her life and does not have the energy to continue writing fiction.

1904 Jewett's last published writing, "A Spring Story," appears in the May issue of *McClure's*.

1908 Mrs. Louis Brandeis, wife of the future Supreme Court Justice, brings Willa Cather to an afternoon tea at 148 Charles Street. Jewett corresponds with Cather, giving her sage advice in order about her writing career and urges her to quit journalism to practice fiction full time. Heeding Jewett's counsel, Cather dedicates her second novel, *O Pioneers!* (1913), to Jewett.

1909 At the age of fifty-nine, Jewett dies of a cerebral hemorrhage on June 24 at her home in South Berwick.

1910 The final Dunnet Landing tale, "William's Wedding," left unfinished at Jewett's death, is published posthumously in the August issue of *Atlantic Monthly*.

A Note on the Text

This Broadview edition of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is based on the first edition published in 1896 by the Houghton Mifflin Company.

For the Dunnet Landing stories the texts of "The Queen's Twin" and "A Dunnet Shepherdess" are reprinted from *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899). "The Foreigner" is reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* 86 (August 1900): 152-67. "William's Wedding" is taken from its initial publication in the *Atlantic Monthly* 106 (August 1910): 33-40, though it remained unfinished at Jewett's death.

The stories as published in this Broadview edition are arranged from earliest to last. This order differs from their publication in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1910 and subsequently.

For a discussion of the textual history of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and the Dunnet Landing stories see the Introduction, above, p. 22-25.

The Country of the Pointed Firs

I. The Return

There was something about the coast town of Dunnet which made it seem more attractive than other maritime villages of eastern Maine. Perhaps it was the simple fact of acquaintance with that neighborhood which made it so attaching, and gave such interest to the rocky shore and dark woods, and the few houses which seemed to be securely wedged and tree-nailed in among the ledges by the Landing. These houses made the most of their seaward view, and there was a gayety and determined floweriness in their bits of garden ground; the small-paned high windows in the peaks of their steep gables were like knowing eyes that watched the harbor and the far sea-line beyond, or looked northward all along the shore and its background of spruces and balsam firs. When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person. The process of falling in love at first sight is as final as it is swift in such a case, but the growth of true friendship may be a lifelong affair.

After a first brief visit made two or three summers before in the course of a yachting cruise, a lover of Dunnet Landing returned to find the unchanged shores of the pointed firs, the same quaintness of the village with its elaborate conventionalities; all that mixture of remoteness, and childish certainty of being the centre of civilization of which her affectionate dreams had told. One evening in June, a single passenger landed upon the steamboat wharf. The tide was high, there was a fine crowd of spectators, and the younger portion of the company followed her with subdued excitement up the narrow street of the salt-aired, white-clapboarded little town.

II. Mrs. Todd

Later, there was only one fault to find with this choice of a summer lodging-place, and that was its complete lack of seclusion. At first the tiny house of Mrs. Almira Todd, which stood with its end to the street, appeared to be retired and sheltered enough from the busy world, behind its bushy bit of a green garden, in which all the blooming things, two or three gay hollyhocks and some London-pride, were pushed back against the gray-shingled wall. It was a queer little garden and puzzling to a stranger, the few flowers being put at a disadvantage by so much

greenery; but the discovery was soon made that Mrs. Todd was an ardent lover of herbs, both wild and tame, and the sea-breezes blew into the low end-window of the house laden with not only sweet-brier and sweet-mary, but balm and sage and borage and mint, wormwood and southernwood.[1] If Mrs. Todd had occasion to step into the far corner of her herb plot, she trod heavily upon thyme,[2] and made its fragrant presence known with all the rest. Being a very large person, her full skirts brushed and bent almost every slender stalk that her feet missed. You could always tell when she was stepping about there, even when you were half awake in the morning, and learned to know, in the course of a few weeks' experience, in exactly which corner of the garden she might be.

At one side of this herb plot were other growths of a rustic pharmacopoeia, great treasures and rarities among the commoner herbs. There were some strange and pungent odors that roused a dim sense and remembrance of something in the forgotten past. Some of these might once have belonged to sacred and mystic rites, and have had some occult knowledge handed with them down the centuries; but now they pertained only to

1 As a healer in her community, Mrs. Todd is growing plants that all have medicinal effects. Sweet-brier (eglantine rose) plants, like all roses, produce rose hips (the berry-like fruits from the plant) that not only have a high Vitamin C content, but have been used for their anti-inflammatory properties to treat osteoarthritis of the knees and hips. Sweet-mary (lemon balm) is used to treat children with colds, flu, and fever, and to soothe stomach problems. Balm refers to Balm of Gilead (*Populus Candicans*), a healing compound made from the resinous gum of this tree, used for illnesses in the chest, stomach, kidneys, and for rheumatism and scurvy. It is also combined with lard or oil to be applied on the skin for bruises and swellings. Sage is an evergreen perennial used internally to treat indigestion, gassiness, and to boost liver function, as well as to aid in reducing the symptoms of menopause, including night sweats, anxiety, and depression. It can be used externally to treat insect bites, as well as mouth, gum, and skin infections. Borage is used as a diuretic and for fevers and pulmonary complaints. Mint comes in a variety of kinds; peppermint is used for flatulence, colic, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea, while spearmint treats hiccough, flatulence, and indigestion. The bitter herb, wormwood, relieves depression and helps reduce the yellow color of jaundice from the skin; it can also promote digestion and increase appetite. Southernwood encourages menstruation, treats intestinal worms, and is used as an antiseptic.

2 Thyme treats whooping cough and is helpful with colic in infants.

humble compounds brewed at intervals with molasses or vinegar or spirits in a small caldron on Mrs. Todd's kitchen stove. They were dispensed to suffering neighbors, who usually came at night as if by stealth, bringing their own ancient-looking vials to be filled. One nostrum was called the Indian remedy,[1] and its price was but fifteen cents; the whispered directions could be heard as customers passed the windows. With most remedies the purchaser was allowed to depart unadmonished from the kitchen, Mrs. Todd being a wise saver of steps; but with certain vials she gave cautions, standing in the doorway, and there were other doses which had to be accompanied on their healing way as far as the gate, while she muttered long chapters of directions, and kept up an air of secrecy and importance to the last. It may not have been only the common ails of humanity with which she tried to cope; it seemed sometimes as if love and hate and jealousy and adverse winds at sea might also find their proper remedies among the curious wild-looking plants in Mrs. Todd's garden.

The village doctor and this learned herbalist were upon the best of terms. The good man may have counted upon the unfavorable effect of certain potions which he should find his opportunity in counteracting; at any rate, he now and then stopped and exchanged greetings with Mrs. Todd over the picket fence. The conversation became at once professional after the briefest preliminaries, and he would stand twirling a sweet-scented sprig in his fingers, and make suggestive jokes, perhaps about her faith in a too persistent course of thoroughwort elixir,[2] in which my landlady professed such firm belief as sometimes to endanger the life and usefulness of worthy neighbors.

To arrive at this quietest of seaside villages late in June, when the busy herb-gathering season was just beginning, was also to arrive in the early prime of Mrs. Todd's activity in the brewing of

1 Both black (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) and blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) were traditional Native American remedies associated with gynecological concerns. Black cohosh is used to alleviate cramps, painful periods, and to address a variety of menopausal symptoms. Blue cohosh, also known as squawroot and papoose root, was used during pregnancy and childbirth to ease labor. Yet it also could induce labor and was sometimes used to abort a fetus. The secrecy implied in the "whispered directions" Mrs. Todd gives suggests that there is an element of privacy or reticence associated with this unnamed "Indian remedy."

2 Also known as boneset or agueweed, thoroughwort is a herb used in a Native American remedy to make a bitter tea that induced sweating and treated fever, constipation, and influenza.

old-fashioned spruce beer.[1] This cooling and refreshing drink had been brought to wonderful perfection through a long series of experiments; it had won immense local fame, and the supplies for its manufacture were always giving out and having to be replenished. For various reasons, the seclusion and uninterrupted days which had been looked forward to proved to be very rare in this otherwise delightful corner of the world. My hostess and I had made our shrewd business agreement on the basis of a simple cold luncheon at noon, and liberal restitution in the matter of hot suppers, to provide for which the lodger might sometimes be seen hurrying down the road, late in the day, with cunner line in hand.[2] It was soon found that this arrangement made large allowance for Mrs. Todd's slow herb-gathering progresses through woods and pastures. The spruce-beer customers were pretty steady in hot weather, and there were many demands for different soothing syrups and elixirs with which the unwise curiosity of my early residence had made me acquainted. Knowing Mrs. Todd to be a widow, who had little beside this slender business and the income from one hungry lodger to maintain her, one's energies and even interest were quickly bestowed, until it became a matter of course that she should go afield every pleasant day, and that the lodger should answer all peremptory knocks at the side door.

In taking an occasional wisdom-giving stroll in Mrs. Todd's company, and in acting as business partner during her frequent absences, I found the July days fly fast, and it was not until I felt myself confronted with too great pride and pleasure in the display, one night, of two dollars and twenty-seven cents which I had taken in during the day, that I remembered a long piece of writing, sadly belated now, which I was bound to do. To have been patted kindly on the shoulder and called "darlin'," to have been offered a surprise of early mushrooms for supper, to have had all the glory of making two dollars and twenty-seven cents in a single day, and then to renounce it all and withdraw from these pleasant successes, needed much resolution. Literary employments are so vexed with uncertainties at best, and it was not until the voice of conscience sounded louder in my ears than the sea

1 A beverage dating back to the 1700s, spruce beer is flavored with the buds of spruce trees and mixed with hops, yeast, water, and molasses in both alcoholic and non-alcoholic recipes.

2 A cunner is a salt-water fish in the wrasse family found in shallow waters off the Atlantic coast.

on the nearest pebble beach that I said unkind words of withdrawal to Mrs. Todd. She only became more wistfully affectionate than ever in her expressions, and looked as disappointed as I expected when I frankly told her that I could no longer enjoy the pleasure of what we called "seein' folks." I felt that I was cruel to a whole neighborhood in curtailing her liberty in this most important season for harvesting the different wild herbs that were so much counted upon to ease their winter ails.

"Well, dear," she said sorrowfully, "I've took great advantage o' your bein' here. I ain't had such a season for years, but I have never had nobody I could so trust. All you lack is a few qualities, but with time you'd gain judgment an' experience, an' be very able in the business. I'd stand right here an' say it to anybody."

Mrs. Todd and I were not separated or estranged by the change in our business relations; on the contrary, a deeper intimacy seemed to begin. I do not know what herb of the night it was that used sometimes to send out a penetrating odor late in the evening, after the dew had fallen, and the moon was high, and the cool air came up from the sea. Then Mrs. Todd would feel that she must talk to somebody, and I was only too glad to listen. We both fell under the spell, and she either stood outside the window, or made an errand to my sitting-room, and told, it might be very commonplace news of the day, or, as happened one misty summer night, all that lay deepest in her heart. It was in this way that I came to know that she had loved one who was far above her.

"No, dear, him I speak of could never think of me," she said. "When we was young together his mother didn't favor the match, an' done everything she could to part us; and folks thought we both married well, but 't wa'n't what either one of us wanted most; an' now we're left alone again, an' might have had each other all the time. He was above bein' a seafarin' man, an' prospered more than most; he come of a high family, an' my lot was plain an' hard-workin'. I ain't seen him for some years; he's forgot our youthful feelin's, I expect, but a woman's heart is different; them feelin's comes back when you think you've done with 'em, as sure as spring comes with the year. An' I've always had ways of hearin' about him."

She stood in the centre of a braided rug, and its rings of black and gray seemed to circle about her feet in the dim light. Her height and massiveness in the low room gave her the look of a

huge sibyl,[1] while the strange fragrance of the mysterious herb blew in from the little garden.

III. The Schoolhouse

For some days after this, Mrs. Todd's customers came and went past my windows, and, haying-time being nearly over, strangers began to arrive from the inland country, such was her widespread reputation. Sometimes I saw a pale young creature like a white windflower left over into midsummer, upon whose face consumption had set its bright and wistful mark; but oftener two stout, hard-worked women from the farms came together, and detailed their symptoms to Mrs. Todd in loud and cheerful voices, combining the satisfactions of a friendly gossip with the medical opportunity. They seemed to give much from their own store of therapeutic learning. I became aware of the school in which my landlady had strengthened her natural gift; but hers was always the governing mind, and the final command, "Take of hy'sop[2] one handful" (or whatever herb it was), was received in respectful silence. One afternoon, when I had listened,—it was impossible not to listen, with cottonless ears,—and then laughed and listened again, with an idle pen in my hand, during a particularly spirited and personal conversation, I reached for my hat, and, taking blotting-book[3] and all under my arm, I resolutely fled further temptation, and walked out past the fragrant green garden and up the dusty road. The way went straight uphill, and presently I stopped and turned to look back.

The tide was in, the wide harbor was surrounded by its dark woods, and the small wooden houses stood as near as they could get to the landing. Mrs. Todd's was the last house on the way inland. The gray ledges of the rocky shore were well covered with sod in most places, and the pasture bayberry and wild roses grew thick among them. I could see the higher inland country and the

1 Sibyls were Greek female prophets associated with specific shrines (such as the Sibyl of Delphi) from which they foretold the future.

2 The hyssop plant is cultivated medicinally for its flower-tops which are brewed into an infusion that treats colds and coughs and is used as an expectorant to clear mucous membranes. Its leaves can also be applied externally to heal cuts and alleviate bruises.

3 Toward the end of the sixteenth century in England, "blotting book" signified any kind of book, including a personal diary.

scattered farms. On the brink of the hill stood a little white schoolhouse, much wind-blown and weather-beaten, which was a landmark to seagoing folk; from its door there was a most beautiful view of sea and shore. The summer vacation now prevailed, and after finding the door unfastened, and taking a long look through one of the seaward windows, and reflecting afterward for some time in a shady place near by among the bayberry bushes, I returned to the chief place of business in the village, and, to the amusement of two of the selectmen, brothers and autocrats of Dunnet Landing, I hired the schoolhouse for the rest of the vacation for fifty cents a week.

Selfish as it may appear, the retired situation seemed to possess great advantages, and I spent many days there quite undisturbed, with the sea-breeze blowing through the small, high windows and swaying the heavy outside shutters to and fro. I hung my hat and luncheon-basket on an entry nail as if I were a small scholar, but I sat at the teacher's desk as if I were that great authority, with all the timid empty benches in rows before me. Now and then an idle sheep came and stood for a long time looking in at the door. At sundown I went back, feeling most businesslike, down toward the village again, and usually met the flavor, not of the herb garden, but of Mrs. Todd's hot supper, halfway up the hill. On the nights when there were evening meetings or other public exercises that demanded her presence we had tea very early, and I was welcomed back as if from a long absence.

Once or twice I feigned excuses for staying at home, while Mrs. Todd made distant excursions, and came home late, with both hands full and a heavily laden apron. This was in pennyroyal time, and when the rare lobelia was in its prime and the elecampane was coming on.[1] One day she appeared at the schoolhouse itself, partly out of amused curiosity about my industries; but she explained that there was no tansy[2] in the neighborhood with such snap to it as some that grew about the schoolhouse lot. Being scuffed down all the spring made it grow so much the better, like

1 Pennyroyal, a member of the mint family, is a traditional folk medicine used as both an insect repellant and to stimulate abortions. A genus of flowering plants, *lobelia* was used by Native Americans as a purgative and to treat respiratory and muscle disorders. Elecampane is an herb commonly used for coughs, consumption and other pulmonary complaints, and was a favorite nineteenth-century domestic remedy for bronchitis.

2 A flowering plant of the aster family, tansy is a medicinal herb used to treat migraines and joint pain.

some folks that had it hard in their youth, and were bound to make the most of themselves before they died.

IV. At the Schoolhouse Window

One day I reached the schoolhouse very late, owing to attendance upon the funeral of an acquaintance and neighbor, with whose sad decline in health I had been familiar, and whose last days both the doctor and Mrs. Todd had tried in vain to ease. The services had taken place at one o'clock, and now, at quarter past two, I stood at the schoolhouse window, looking down at the procession as it went along the lower road close to the shore. It was a walking funeral, and even at that distance I could recognize most of the mourners as they went their solemn way. Mrs. Begg had been very much respected, and there was a large company of friends following to her grave. She had been brought up on one of the neighboring farms, and each of the few times that I had seen her she professed great dissatisfaction with town life. The people lived too close together for her liking, at the Landing, and she could not get used to the constant sound of the sea. She had lived to lament three seafaring husbands, and her house was decorated with West Indian curiosities, specimens of conch shells and fine coral which they had brought home from their voyages in lumber-laden ships. Mrs. Todd had told me all our neighbor's history. They had been girls together, and, to use her own phrase, had "both seen trouble till they knew the best and worst on't." I could see the sorrowful, large figure of Mrs. Todd as I stood at the window. She made a break in the procession by walking slowly and keeping the after-part of it back. She held a handkerchief to her eyes, and I knew, with a pang of sympathy, that hers was not affected grief.

Beside her, after much difficulty, I recognized the one strange and unrelated person in all the company, an old man who had always been mysterious to me. I could see his thin, bending figure. He wore a narrow, long-tailed coat and walked with a stick, and had the same "cant to leeward"[1] as the wind-bent trees on the height above.

This was Captain Littlepage, whom I had seen only once or twice before, sitting pale and old behind a closed window; never out of doors until now. Mrs. Todd always shook her head gravely

1 Leaning away from the wind.

when I asked a question, and said that he wasn't what he had been once, and seemed to class him with her other secrets. He might have belonged with a simple[1] which grew in a certain slug-haunted corner of the garden, whose use she could never be betrayed into telling me, though I saw her cutting the tops by moonlight once, as if it were a charm, and not a medicine, like the great fading bloodroot leaves.[2]

I could see that she was trying to keep pace with the old captain's lighter steps. He looked like an aged grasshopper of some strange human variety. Behind this pair was a short, impatient, little person, who kept the captain's house, and gave it what Mrs. Todd and others believed to be no proper sort of care. She was usually called "that Mari' Harris" in subdued conversation between intimates, but they treated her with anxious civility when they met her face to face.

The bay-sheltered islands and the great sea beyond stretched away to the far horizon southward and eastward; the little procession in the foreground looked futile and helpless on the edge of the rocky shore. It was a glorious day early in July, with a clear, high sky; there were no clouds, there was no noise of the sea. The song sparrows sang and sang, as if with joyous knowledge of immortality, and contempt for those who could so pettily concern themselves with death. I stood watching until the funeral procession had crept round a shoulder of the slope below and disappeared from the great landscape as if it had gone into a cave.

An hour later I was busy at my work. Now and then a bee blundered in and took me for an enemy; but there was a useful stick upon the teacher's desk, and I rapped to call the bees to order as if they were unruly scholars, or waved them away from their riots over the ink, which I had bought at the Landing store, and discovered too late to be scented with bergamot, as if to refresh the labors of anxious scribes.[3] One anxious scribe felt very dull that day; a sheep-bell tinkled near by, and called her

1 An archaic reference to any herbaceous plant having medicinal properties.

2 A relative of the poppy, bloodroot takes its name from its red root that was used in dye and as war paint by Native Americans. It was used as a love charm by the Ponca Indian tribe of Oklahoma whose men dyed their hands with it and then shook them in front of the woman they wanted to marry.

3 Bergamot, or bee balm, is a medicinal plant used to relieve headaches and sore throats; it also treats insomnia, and so makes the narrator sleepy as she tries to write.

wandering wits after it. The sentences failed to catch these lovely summer cadences. For the first time I began to wish for a companion and for news from the outer world, which had been, half unconsciously, forgotten. Watching the funeral gave one a sort of pain. I began to wonder if I ought not to have walked with the rest, instead of hurrying away at the end of the services. Perhaps the Sunday gown I had put on for the occasion was making this disastrous change of feeling, but I had now made myself and my friends remember that I did not really belong to Dunnet Landing.

I sighed, and turned to the half-written page again.

V. Captain Littlepage

It was a long time after this; an hour was very long in that coast town where nothing stole away the shortest minute. I had lost myself completely in work, when I heard footsteps outside. There was a steep footpath between the upper and the lower road, which I climbed to shorten the way, as the children had taught me, but I believed that Mrs. Todd would find it inaccessible, unless she had occasion to seek me in great haste. I wrote on, feeling like a besieged miser of time, while the footsteps came nearer, and the sheep-bell tinkled away in haste as if some one had shaken a stick in its wearer's face. Then I looked, and saw Captain Littlepage passing the nearest window; the next moment he tapped politely at the door.

"Come in, sir," I said, rising to meet him; and he entered, bowing with much courtesy. I stepped down from the desk and offered him a chair by the window, where he seated himself at once, being sadly spent by his climb. I returned to my fixed seat behind the teacher's desk, which gave him the lower place of a scholar.

"You ought to have the place of honor, Captain Littlepage," I said.

"A happy, rural seat of various views,"[1]

he quoted, as he gazed out into the sunshine and up the long wooded shore. Then he glanced at me, and looked all about him as pleased as a child.

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1 From John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, l. 247. The line refers to Satan gazing down upon the gardens in paradise.

"My quotation was from Paradise Lost: the greatest of poems, I suppose you know?" and I nodded. "There's nothing that ranks, to my mind, with Paradise Lost; it's all lofty, all lofty," he continued. "Shakespeare was a great poet; he copied life, but you have to put up with a great deal of low talk."

I now remembered that Mrs. Todd had told me one day that Captain Littlepage had overset his mind with too much reading; she had also made dark reference to his having "spells" of some unexplainable nature. I could not help wondering what errand had brought him out in search of me. There was something quite charming in his appearance: it was a face thin and delicate with refinement, but worn into appealing lines, as if he had suffered from loneliness and misapprehension. He looked, with his careful precision of dress, as if he were the object of cherishing care on the part of elderly unmarried sisters, but I knew Mari' Harris to be a very commonplace, inelegant person, who would have no such standards; it was plain that the captain was his own attentive valet. He sat looking at me expectantly. I could not help thinking that, with his queer head and length of thinness, he was made to hop along the road of life rather than to walk. The captain was very grave indeed, and I bade my inward spirit keep close to discretion.

"Poor Mrs. Begg has gone," I ventured to say. I still wore my Sunday gown by way of showing respect.

"She has gone," said the captain,—"very easy at the last, I was informed; she slipped away as if she were glad of the opportunity."

I thought of the Countess of Carberry, and felt that history repeated itself.[1]

"She was one of the old stock," continued Captain Littlepage, with touching sincerity. "She was very much looked up to in this town, and will be missed."

I wondered, as I looked at him, if he had sprung from a line of ministers; he had the refinement of look and air of command which are the heritage of the old ecclesiastical families of New England. But as Darwin says in his autobiography, "there is no

1 A reference to Frances, the second wife of Richard Vaughan, a Welsh soldier, peer, and politician who was the second Earl of Carbery. Littlepage's comment on her death— "as if she were glad of the opportunity"—quotes from Anglican Bishop Jeremy Taylor's (1613-67) funeral sermon upon her death in 1650, in which he states that the Countess "died, as if she had been glad of the opportunity."

such king as a sea-captain; he is greater even than a king or a schoolmaster!"[1]

Captain Littlepage moved his chair out of the wake of the sunshine, and still sat looking at me. I began to be very eager to know upon what errand he had come.

"It may be found out some o' these days," he said earnestly. "We may know it all, the next step; where Mrs. Begg is now, for instance. Certainty, not conjecture, is what we all desire."

"I suppose we shall know it all some day," said I.

"We shall know it while yet below," insisted the captain, with a flush of impatience on his thin cheeks. "We have not looked for truth in the right direction. I know what I speak of; those who have laughed at me little know how much reason my ideas are based upon." He waved his hand toward the village below. "In that handful of houses they fancy that they comprehend the universe."

I smiled, and waited for him to go on.

"I am an old man, as you can see," he continued, "and I have been a shipmaster the greater part of my life,—forty-three years in all. You may not think it, but I am above eighty years of age."

He did not look so old, and I hastened to say so.

"You must have left the sea a good many years ago, then, Captain Littlepage?" I said.

"I should have been serviceable at least five or six years more," he answered. "My acquaintance with certain—my experience upon a certain occasion, I might say, gave rise to prejudice. I do not mind telling you that I chanced to learn of one of the greatest discoveries that man has ever made."

Now we were approaching dangerous ground, but a sudden sense of his sufferings at the hands of the ignorant came to my help, and I asked to hear more with all the deference I really felt. A swallow flew into the schoolhouse at this moment as if a kingbird were after it, and beat itself against the walls for a minute, and escaped again to the open air; but Captain Littlepage took no notice whatever of the flurry.

"I had a valuable cargo of general merchandise from the

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1 A quotation from Charles Darwin's letter to Charles Whitley of 23 July 1834 that, "As Captains of Men of wars are the greatest men going, far greater than Kings or Schoolmasters." Jewett confuses the origin of the quotation with an autobiographical sketch written by Darwin for his family and published in *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, edited by his son, Francis Darwin, in 1887.

London docks to Fort Churchill,[1] a station of the old company on Hudson's Bay,"[2] said the captain earnestly. "We were delayed in lading, and baffled by head winds and a heavy tumbling sea all the way north-about and across. Then the fog kept us off the coast; and when I made port at last, it was too late to delay in those northern waters with such a vessel and such a crew as I had. They cared for nothing, and idled me into a fit of sickness; but my first mate was a good, excellent man, with no more idea of being frozen in there until spring than I had, so we made what speed we could to get clear of Hudson's Bay and off the coast. I owned an eighth of the vessel, and he owned a sixteenth of her. She was a full-rigged ship, called the Minerva, but she was getting old and leaky. I meant it should be my last v'y'ge in her, and so it proved. She had been an excellent vessel in her day. Of the cowards aboard her I can't say so much."

"Then you were wrecked?" I asked, as he made a long pause.

"I wa'n't caught astern o' the lighter[3] by any fault of mine," said the captain gloomily. "We left Fort Churchill and run out into the Bay with a light pair o' heels;[4] but I had been vexed to death with their red-tape rigging at the company's office, and chilled with stayin' on deck an' tryin' to hurry up things, and when we were well out o' sight o' land, headin' for Hudson's Straits, I had a bad turn o' some sort o' fever, and had to stay below. The days were getting short, and we made good runs, all well on board but me, and the crew done their work by dint of hard driving."

I began to find this unexpected narrative a little dull. Captain Littlepage spoke with a kind of slow correctness that lacked the longshore high flavor[5] to which I had grown used; but I listened

1 Originally a log fort built in 1717 by James Knight of the Hudson's Bay Company. Located on the west bank of the Churchill river to protect and control the Hudson's Bay Company's interests in the fur trade, the post was renamed Prince of Wales Fort in 1719.

2 Incorporated by British royal charter in 1670 as The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, the Hudson's Bay Company is the oldest commercial corporation in North America, directing the fur trade throughout British-controlled North America for several centuries.

3 To be *astern the lighter* is to be tardy, lagging behind a lighter, a slow-moving craft used for transferring cargo.

4 An idiomatic phrase meaning to ride high in the water and to go at good speed.

5 The flavor of speech of those who live along the coast.

respectfully while he explained the winds having become contrary, and talked on in a dreary sort of way about his voyage, the bad weather, and the disadvantages he was under in the lightness of his ship, which bounced about like a chip in a bucket,[1] and would not answer the rudder or properly respond to the most careful setting of sails.

"So there we were blowin' along anyways," he complained; but looking at me at this moment, and seeing that my thoughts were unkindly wandering, he ceased to speak.

"It was a hard life at sea in those days, I am sure," said I, with redoubled interest.

"It was a dog's life," said the poor old gentleman, quite reassured, "but it made men of those who followed it. I see a change for the worse even in our own town here; full of loafers now, small and poor as 't is, who once would have followed the sea, every lazy soul of 'em. There is no occupation so fit for just that class o' men who never get beyond the fo'cas'le.[2] I view it, in addition, that a community narrows down and grows dreadful ignorant when it is shut up to its own affairs, and gets no knowledge of the outside world except from a cheap, unprincipled newspaper. In the old days, a good part o' the best men here knew a hundred ports and something of the way folks lived in them. They saw the world for themselves, and like's not their wives and children saw it with them. They may not have had the best of knowledge to carry with 'em sight-seein', but they were some acquainted with foreign lands an' their laws, an' could see outside the battle for town clerk here in Dunnet; they got some sense o' proportion. Yes, they lived more dignified, and their houses were better within an' without. Shipping's a terrible loss to this part o' New England from a social point o' view, ma'am."

"I have thought of that myself," I returned, with my interest quite awakened. "It accounts for the change in a great many things,—the sad disappearance of sea-captains,—doesn't it?"

"A shipmaster was apt to get the habit of reading," said my companion, brightening still more, and taking on a most touching air of unreserve. "A captain is not expected to be familiar with his crew, and for company's sake in dull days and nights he turns to his book. Most of us old shipmasters came to know 'most

1 A line with a chip of wood on it that measures the speed of a sailing vessel.

2 Sailors who did not rise to become officers remained in the forecastle, the forward part of a ship housing the common seaman's living quarters.

everything about something; one would take to readin' on farming topics, and some were great on medicine,—but Lord help their poor crews!—or some were all for history, and now and then there'd be one like me that gave his time to the poets. I was well acquainted with a shipmaster that was all for bees an' bee-keepin'; and if you met him in port and went aboard, he'd sit and talk a terrible while about their havin' so much information, and the money that could be made out of keepin' 'em. He was one of the smartest captains that ever sailed the seas, but they used to call the Newcastle, a great bark he commanded for many years, Tuttle's beehive. There was old Cap'n Jameson: he had notions of Solomon's Temple,[1] and made a very handsome little model of the same, right from the Scripture measurements, same's other sailors make little ships and design new tricks of rigging and all that. No, there's nothing to take the place of shipping in a place like ours. These bicycles offend me dreadfully; they don't afford no real opportunities of experience such as a man gained on a voyage. No: when folks left home in the old days they left it to some purpose, and when they got home they stayed there and had some pride in it. There's no large-minded way of thinking now: the worst have got to be best and rule everything; we're all turned upside down and going back year by year."

"Oh no, Captain Littlepage, I hope not," said I, trying to soothe his feelings.

There was a silence in the schoolhouse, but we could hear the noise of the water on a beach below. It sounded like the strange warning wave that gives notice of the turn of the tide. A late golden robin,[2] with the most joyful and eager of voices, was singing close by in a thicket of wild roses.

VI. The Waiting Place

"How did you manage with the rest of that rough voyage on the Minerva?" I asked.

"I shall be glad to explain to you," said Captain Littlepage, forgetting his grievances for the moment. "If I had a map at hand I could explain better. We were driven to and fro 'way up toward

1 According to the Bible, Solomon's Temple was the first temple of ancient Judaism in Jerusalem. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. See 1 Kings 6 for a description of the temple's dimensions.

2 A Baltimore oriole.

what we used to call Parry's[1] Discoveries, and lost our bearings. It was thick and foggy, and at last I lost my ship; she drove on a rock, and we managed to get ashore on what I took to be a barren island, the few of us that were left alive. When she first struck, the sea was somewhat calmer than it had been, and most of the crew, against orders, manned the long-boat and put off in a hurry, and were never heard of more. Our own boat upset, but the carpenter kept himself and me above water, and we drifted in. I had no strength to call upon after my recent fever, and laid down to die; but he found the tracks of a man and dog the second day, and got along the shore to one of those far missionary stations that the Moravians[2] support. They were very poor themselves, and in distress; 't was a useless place. There were but few Esquimaux[3] left in that region. There we remained for some time, and I became acquainted with strange events."

The captain lifted his head and gave me a questioning glance. I could not help noticing that the dulled look in his eyes had gone, and there was instead a clear intentness that made them seem dark and piercing.

"There was a supply ship expected, and the pastor, an excellent Christian man, made no doubt that we should get passage in her. He was hoping that orders would come to break up the station; but everything was uncertain, and we got on the best we could for a while. We fished, and helped the people in other ways; there was no other way of paying our debts. I was taken to the pastor's house until I got better; but they were crowded, and I felt myself in the way, and made excuse to join with an old seaman, a Scotchman, who had built him a warm cabin, and had room in it for another. He was looked upon with regard, and had stood by the pastor in some troubles with the people. He had been on one of those English exploring parties that found one end of the road to the north pole, but never could find the other. We lived like

1 English admiral and explorer Sir William Parry (1790-1855) conducted three voyages into the Arctic in search of the Northwest Passage. He published a two-volume account of these trips, *Three voyages for the discovery of a northwest passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific and narrative of an attempt to reach the North Pole*, in 1844.

2 A Protestant denomination originating in the late fourteenth-century Czech Republic. Also named *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren), it advocates Christian unity, individual piety, missionary work, and music.

3 Eskimos, or, more precisely, the Inuit, the indigenous people of this region.

dogs in a kennel, or so you'd thought if you had seen the hut from the outside; but the main thing was to keep warm; there were piles of birdskins[1] to lie on, and he'd made him a good bunk, and there was another for me. 'T was dreadful dreary waitin' there; we begun to think the supply steamer was lost, and my poor ship broke up and strewed herself all along the shore. We got to watching on the headlands; my men and me knew the people were short of supplies and had to pinch themselves. It ought to read in the Bible, 'Man cannot live by fish alone,'[2] if they'd told the truth of things; 't aint bread that wears the worst on you! First part of the time, old Gaffett, that I lived with, seemed speechless, and I didn't know what to make of him, nor he of me, I dare say; but as we got acquainted, I found he'd been through more disasters than I had, and had troubles that wa'n't going to let him live a great while. It used to ease his mind to talk to an understanding person, so we used to sit and talk together all day, if it rained or blew so that we couldn't get out. I'd got a bad blow on the back of my head at the time we came ashore, and it pained me at times, and my strength was broken, anyway; I've never been so able since."

Captain Littlepage fell into a reverie.

"Then I had the good of my reading," he explained presently. "I had no books; the pastor spoke but little English, and all his books were foreign; but I used to say over all I could remember. The old poets little knew what comfort they could be to a man. I was well acquainted with the works of Milton, but up there it did seem to me as if Shakespeare was the king; he has his sea terms very accurate, and some beautiful passages were calming to the mind. I could say them over until I shed tears; there was nothing beautiful to me in that place but the stars above and those passages of verse."

"Gaffett was always brooding and brooding, and talking to himself; he was afraid he should never get away, and it preyed upon his mind. He thought when I got home I could interest the scientific men in his discovery: but they're all taken up with their own notions; some didn't even take pains to answer the letters I wrote. You observe that I said this crippled man Gaffett had been

1 Inuit garments fashioned from the skin and feathers of birds native to the region that were warm, lightweight, and waterproof.

2 Littlepage revises the injunction—"Man shall not live by bread alone"—that appears three times in the Bible: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, Matthew 4:4, and Luke 4:4.

shipped on a voyage of discovery. I now tell you that the ship was lost on its return, and only Gaffett and two officers were saved off the Greenland coast, and he had knowledge later that those men never got back to England; the brig they shipped on was run down in the night. So no other living soul had the facts, and he gave them to me. There is a strange sort of a country 'way up north beyond the ice, and strange folks living in it. Gaffett believed it was the next world to this."

"What do you mean, Captain Littlepage?" I exclaimed. The old man was bending forward and whispering; he looked over his shoulder before he spoke the last sentence.

"To hear old Gaffett tell about it was something awful," he said, going on with his story quite steadily after the moment of excitement had passed. "'T was first a tale of dogs and sledges, and cold and wind and snow. Then they begun to find the ice grow rotten; they had been frozen in, and got into a current flowing north, far up beyond Fox Channel,[1] and they took to their boats when the ship got crushed, and this warm current took them out of sight of the ice, and into a great open sea; and they still followed it due north, just the very way they had planned to go. Then they struck a coast that wasn't laid down or charted, but the cliffs were such that no boat could land until they found a bay and struck across under sail to the other side where the shore looked lower; they were scant of provisions and out of water, but they got sight of something that looked like a great town. 'For God's sake, Gaffett!' said I, the first time he told me. 'You don't mean a town two degrees farther north than ships had ever been?' for he'd got their course marked on an old chart that he'd pieced out at the top; but he insisted upon it, and told it over and over again, to be sure I had it straight to carry to those who would be interested. There was no snow and ice, he said, after they had sailed some days with that warm current, which seemed to come right from under the ice that they'd been pinched up in and had been crossing on foot for weeks."

"But what about the town?" I asked. "Did they get to the town?"

"They did," said the captain, "and found inhabitants; 't was an awful condition of things. It appeared, as near as Gaffett could express it, like a place where there was neither living nor dead. They could see the place when they were approaching it by sea

1 Fox, or Foxe, Channel connects Hudson Bay, a large body of water in northeastern Canada, to the Arctic ocean.

pretty near like any town, and thick with habitations; but all at once they lost sight of it altogether, and when they got close inshore they could see the shapes of folks, but they never could get near them,—all blowing gray figures that would pass along alone, or sometimes gathered in companies as if they were watching. The men were frightened at first, but the shapes never came near them,—it was as if they blew back; and at last they all got bold and went ashore, and found birds' eggs and sea fowl, like any wild northern spot where creatures were tame and folks had never been, and there was good water. Gaffett said that he and another man came near one o' the fog-shaped men that was going along slow with the look of a pack on his back, among the rocks, an' they chased him; but, Lord! he flittered away out o' sight like a leaf the wind takes with it, or a piece of cobweb. They would make as if they talked together, but there was no sound of voices, and 'they acted as if they didn't see us, but only felt us coming towards them,' says Gaffett one day, trying to tell the particulars. They couldn't see the town when they were ashore. One day the captain and the doctor were gone till night up across the high land where the town had seemed to be, and they came back at night beat out and white as ashes, and wrote and wrote all next day in their notebooks, and whispered together full of excitement, and they were sharp-spoken with the men when they offered to ask any questions.

"Then there came a day," said Captain Littlepage, leaning toward me with a strange look in his eyes, and whispering quickly. "The men all swore they wouldn't stay any longer; the man on watch early in the morning gave the alarm, and they all put off in the boat and got a little way out to sea. Those folks, or whatever they were, come about 'em like bats; all at once they raised incessant armies, and come as if to drive 'em back to sea. They stood thick at the edge o' the water like the ridges o' grim war; no thought o' flight, none of retreat. Sometimes a standing fight, then soaring on main wing tormented all the air.[1] And when they'd got the boat out o' reach o' danger, Gaffett said they looked back, and there was the town again, standing up just as they'd seen it first, comin' on the coast. Say what you might, they all believed 't was a kind of waiting-place between this world an' the next."

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1 From "incessant armies" to "all the air" Littlepage is quoting from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book VI, ll. 138, 236-37, and 243-44, passages that describe the battle between Satan's army and Heaven.

The captain had sprung to his feet in his excitement, and made excited gestures, but he still whispered huskily.

"Sit down, sir," I said as quietly as I could, and he sank into his chair quite spent.

"Gaffett thought the officers were hurrying home to report and to fit out a new expedition when they were all lost. At the time, the men got orders not to talk over what they had seen," the old man explained presently in a more natural tone.

"Weren't they all starving, and wasn't it a mirage or something of that sort?" I ventured to ask. But he looked at me blankly.

"Gaffett had got so that his mind ran on nothing else," he went on. "The ship's surgeon let fall an opinion to the captain, one day, that 't was some condition o' the light and the magnetic currents that let them see those folks. 'T wa'n't a right-feeling part of the world, anyway; they had to battle with the compass to make it serve, an' everything seemed to go wrong. Gaffett had worked it out in his own mind that they was all common ghosts, but the conditions were unusual favorable for seeing them. He was always talking about the Ge'graphical Society,[1] but he never took proper steps, as I view it now, and stayed right there at the mission. He was a good deal crippled, and thought they'd confine him in some jail of a hospital. He said he was waiting to find the right men to tell, somebody bound north. Once in a while they stopped there to leave a mail or something. He was set in his notions, and let two or three proper explorin' expeditions go by him because he didn't like their looks; but when I was there he had got restless, fearin' he might be taken away or something. He had all his directions written out straight as a string to give the right ones. I wanted him to trust 'em to me, so I might have something to show, but he wouldn't. I suppose he's dead now. I wrote to him, an' I done all I could. 'T will be a great exploit some o' these days."

I assented absent-mindedly, thinking more just then of my companion's alert, determined look and the seafaring, ready aspect that had come to his face; but at this moment there fell a sudden change, and the old, pathetic, scholarly look returned. Behind me hung a map of North America, and I saw, as I turned a little, that his eyes were fixed upon the northernmost regions and their careful recent outlines with a look of bewilderment.

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1 Founded in 1830, the British Royal Geographical Society supported many famous explorers and expeditions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Gaffett with his good bunk and the bird-skins, the story of the wreck of the Minerva, the human-shaped creatures of fog and cobweb, the great words of Milton with which he described their onslaught upon the crew, all this moving tale had such an air of truth that I could not argue with Captain Littlepage. The old man looked away from the map as if it had vaguely troubled him, and regarded me appealingly.

"We were just speaking of"—and he stopped. I saw that he had suddenly forgotten his subject.

"There were a great many persons at the funeral," I hastened to say.

"Oh yes," the captain answered, with satisfaction. "All showed respect who could. The sad circumstances had for a moment slipped my mind. Yes, Mrs. Begg will be very much missed. She was a capital manager for her husband when he was at sea. Oh yes, shipping is a very great loss." And he sighed heavily. "There was hardly a man of any standing who didn't interest himself in some way in navigation. It always gave credit to a town. I call it low-water mark[1] now here in Dunnet."

He rose with dignity to take leave, and asked me to stop at his house some day, when he would show me some outlandish things that he had brought home from sea. I was familiar with the subject of the decadence of shipping interests in all its affecting branches, having been already some time in Dunnet, and I felt sure that Captain Littlepage's mind had now returned to a safe level.

As we came down the hill toward the village our ways divided, and when I had seen the old captain well started on a smooth piece of sidewalk which would lead him to his own door, we parted, the best of friends. "Step in some afternoon," he said, as affectionately as if I were a fellow-shipmaster wrecked on the lee shore[2] of age like himself. I turned toward home, and presently met Mrs. Todd coming toward me with an anxious expression.

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1 The nadir, or lowest point.

2 The stretch of shoreline where the wind is blowing toward the shore; it is dangerous to ships because wind blowing to shore can run them aground. In terms of Littlepage's age, the beach of a lee shore in a storm is particularly vulnerable to erosion due to the effects of the wind and waves.

"I see you sleevin'[1] the old gentleman down the hill," she suggested.

"Yes. I've had a very interesting afternoon with him," I answered; and her face brightened.

"Oh, then he's all right. I was afraid 't was one o' his flighty spells, an' Mari' Harris wouldn't"—

"Yes," I returned, smiling, "he has been telling me some old stories, but we talked about Mrs. Begg and the funeral beside, and *Paradise Lost*."

"I expect he got tellin' of you some o' his great narratives," she answered, looking at me shrewdly. "Funerals always sets him goin'. Some o' them tales hangs together toler'ble well," she added, with a sharper look than before. "An' he's been a great reader all his seafarin' days. Some thinks he overdid, and affected his head, but for a man o' his years he's amazin' now when he's at his best. Oh, he used to be a beautiful man!"

We were standing where there was a fine view of the harbor and its long stretches of shore all covered by the great army of the pointed firs, darkly cloaked and standing as if they waited to embark. As we looked far seaward among the outer islands, the trees seemed to march seaward still, going steadily over the heights and down to the water's edge.

It had been growing gray and cloudy, like the first evening of autumn, and a shadow had fallen on the darkening shore. Suddenly, as we looked, a gleam of golden sunshine struck the outer islands, and one of them shone out clear in the light, and revealed itself in a compelling way to our eyes. Mrs. Todd was looking off across the bay with a face full of affection and interest. The sunburst upon that outermost island made it seem like a sudden revelation of the world beyond this which some believe to be so near.

"That's where mother lives," said Mrs. Todd. "Can't we see it plain? I was brought up out there on Green Island. I know every rock an' bush on it."

"Your mother!" I exclaimed, with great interest.

"Yes, dear, cert'in; I've got her yet, old 's I be. She's one of them spry, light-footed little women; always was, an' lighthearted, too," answered Mrs. Todd, with satisfaction. "She's seen

1 To take hold of or hang upon someone's arm.

all the trouble folks can see, without it's her last sickness;[1] an' she's got a word of courage for everybody. Life ain't spoilt her a mite. She's eighty-six an' I'm sixty-seven, and I've seen the time I've felt a good sight the oldest. 'Land sakes alive!' says she, last time I was out to see her. 'How you do lurch about steppin' into a bo't!' I laughed so I liked to have gone right over into the water; an' we pushed off, an' left her laughin' there on the shore."

The light had faded as we watched. Mrs. Todd had mounted a gray rock, and stood there grand and architectural, like a *caryatide*.[2] Presently she stepped down, and we continued our way homeward.

"You an' me, we'll take a bo't an' go out some day and see mother," she promised me. "'T would please her very much, an' there's one or two sca'ce herbs grows better on the island than anywheres else. I ain't seen their like nowheres here on the main."

"Now I 'm goin' right down to get us each a mug o' my beer," she announced as we entered the house, "an' I believe I'll sneak in a little mite o' camomile.[3] Goin' to the funeral an' all, I feel to have had a very wearin' afternoon."

I heard her going down into the cool little cellar, and then there was considerable delay. When she returned, mug in hand, I noticed the taste of camomile, in spite of my protest; but its flavor was disguised by some other herb that I did not know, and she stood over me until I drank it all and said that I liked it.

"I don't give that to everybody," said Mrs. Todd kindly; and I felt for a moment as if it were part of a spell and incantation, and as if my enchantress would now begin to look like the cobweb shapes of the arctic town. Nothing happened but a quiet evening and some delightful plans that we made about going to Green Island, and on the morrow there was the clear sunshine and blue sky of another day.

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1 "Without" here is a dialect substitution for "unless," meaning that Mrs. Todd's mother has seen all of the troubles of life except for her own death.

2 In Greek architecture, a sculpted female figure used as a supporting column. In the first half of the nineteenth century, caryatids were popular as mantelpiece supports.

3 A tea that relieves stomach indigestion, promotes calm and relaxation, and facilitates sleep; it takes its name from the Greek words for "ground" and "apple" because it grows close to the ground and its aroma is apple-like.

VIII. Green Island

One morning, very early, I heard Mrs. Todd in the garden outside my window. By the unusual loudness of her remarks to a passer-by, and the notes of a familiar hymn which she sang as she worked among the herbs, and which came as if directed purposely to the sleepy ears of my consciousness, I knew that she wished I would wake up and come and speak to her.

In a few minutes she responded to a morning voice from behind the blinds. "I expect you're goin' up to your schoolhouse to pass all this pleasant day; yes, I expect you're goin' to be dreadful busy," she said despairingly.

"Perhaps not," said I. "Why, what's going to be the matter with you, Mrs. Todd?" For I supposed that she was tempted by the fine weather to take one of her favorite expeditions along the shore pastures to gather herbs and simples, and would like to have me keep the house.

"No, I don't want to go nowhere by land," she answered gayly,—"no, not by land; but I don't know 's we shall have a better day all the rest of the summer to go out to Green Island an' see mother. I waked up early thinkin' of her. The wind's light northeast,—'t will take us right straight out; an' this time o' year it's liable to change round southwest an' fetch us home pretty, 'long late in the afternoon. Yes, it's goin' to be a good day."

"Speak to the captain and the Bowden boy, if you see anybody going by toward the landing," said I. "We'll take the big boat."

"Oh, my sakes! now you let me do things my way," said Mrs. Todd scornfully. "No, dear, we won't take no big bo't. I'll just git a handy dory,[1] an' Johnny Bowden an' me, we'll man her ourselves. I don't want no abler bo't than a good dory, an' a nice light breeze ain't goin' to make no sea; an' Johnny's my cousin's son,—mother'll like to have him come; an' he'll be down to the herrin' weirs[2] all the time we're there, anyway; we don't want to carry no men folks havin' to be considered every minute an' takin' up all our time. No, you let me do; we'll just slip out an' see mother by ourselves. I guess what breakfast you'll want 's about ready now."

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1 A small, shallow boat, 15 to 22 feet in length, often used on the open sea for commercial fishing.

2 A fence-like structure that allows water to flow out but that traps fish behind it. Ocean or tidal weirs are large structures made of wood or rocks and constructed in a crescent shape; they use the ebb and flow of the tide to trap fish on the shoreside.

I had become well acquainted with Mrs. Todd as landlady, herb-gatherer, and rustic philosopher; we had been discreet fellow-passengers once or twice when I had sailed up the coast to a larger town than Dunnet Landing to do some shopping; but I was yet to become acquainted with her as a mariner. An hour later we pushed off from the landing in the desired dory. The tide was just on the turn, beginning to fall, and several friends and acquaintances stood along the side of the dilapidated wharf and cheered us by their words and evident interest. Johnny Bowden and I were both rowing in haste to get out where we could catch the breeze and put up the small sail which lay clumsily furled along the gunwale. Mrs. Todd sat aft, a stern and unbending law-giver.

"You better let her drift; we'll get there 'bout as quick; the tide'll take her right out from under these old buildin's; there's plenty wind outside."

"Your bo't ain't trimmed proper, Mis' Todd!" exclaimed a voice from shore. "You're lo'ded so the bo't'll drag; you can't git her before the wind, ma'am. You set 'midships, Mis' Todd, an' let the boy hold the sheet 'n' steer after he gits the sail up; you won't never git out to Green Island that way. She's lo'ded bad, your bo't is,—she's heavy behind 's she is now!"

Mrs. Todd turned with some difficulty and regarded the anxious adviser, my right oar flew out of water, and we seemed about to capsize. "That you, Asa? Good-mornin'," she said politely. "I al'ays liked the starn seat best. When'd you git back from up country?"

This allusion to Asa's origin was not lost upon the rest of the company. We were some little distance from shore, but we could hear a chuckle of laughter, and Asa, a person who was too ready with his criticism and advice on every possible subject, turned and walked indignantly away.

When we caught the wind we were soon on our seaward course, and only stopped to underrun a trawl,[1] for the floats of which Mrs. Todd looked earnestly, explaining that her mother might not be prepared for three extra to dinner; it was her brother's trawl, and she meant to just run her eye along for the right sort of a little haddock. I leaned over the boat's side with great interest and excitement, while she skillfully handled the long line of hooks, and made scornful remarks upon worthless,

1 The raising up of a trawl line to collect its catch of fish; a trawl line is a long fishing line with several shorter lines and hooks attached to it.

bait-consuming creatures of the sea as she reviewed them and left them on the trawl or shook them off into the waves. At last we came to what she pronounced a proper haddock, and having taken him on board and ended his life resolutely, we went our way.

As we sailed along I listened to an increasingly delightful commentary upon the islands, some of them barren rocks, or at best giving sparse pasturage for sheep in the early summer. On one of these an eager little flock ran to the water's edge and bleated at us so affectingly that I would willingly have stopped; but Mrs. Todd steered away from the rocks, and scolded at the sheep's mean owner, an acquaintance of hers, who grudged the little salt and still less care which the patient creatures needed. The hot midsummer sun makes prisons of these small islands that are a paradise in early June, with their cool springs and short thick-growing grass. On a larger island, farther out to sea, my entertaining companion showed me with glee the small houses of two farmers who shared the island between them, and declared that for three generations the people had not spoken to each other even in times of sickness or death or birth. "When the news come that the war was over,[1] one of 'em knew it a week, and never stepped across his wall to tell the other," she said. "There, they enjoy it: they've got to have somethin' to interest 'em in such a place; 't is a good deal more tryin' to be tied to folks you don't like than 't is to be alone. Each of 'em tells the neighbors their wrongs; plenty likes to hear and tell again; them as fetch a bone'll carry one,[2] an' so they keep the fight a-goin'. I must say I like variety myself; some folks washes Monday an' irons Tuesday the whole year round, even if the circus is goin' by!"

A long time before we landed at Green Island we could see the small white house, standing high like a beacon, where Mrs. Todd was born and where her mother lived, on a green slope above the water, with dark spruce woods still higher. There were crops in the fields, which we presently distinguished from one another. Mrs. Todd examined them while we were still far at sea. "Mother's late potatoes looks backward; ain't had rain enough so far," she pronounced her opinion. "They look weedier than what they call Front Street down to Cowper Centre. I expect brother

1 The American Civil War, 1861-65.

2 A variation of the proverbial saying, "The dog that fetches will carry," suggesting that neighborhood gossips will tell tales both about you as well as to you.

William is so occupied with his herrin' weirs an' servin' out bait to the schooners[1] that he don't think once a day of the land."

"What's the flag for, up above the spruces there behind the house?" I inquired, with eagerness.

"Oh, that's the sign for herrin'," she explained kindly, while Johnny Bowden regarded me with contemptuous surprise. "When they get enough for schooners they raise that flag; an' when 't is a poor catch in the weir pocket they just fly a little signal down by the shore, an' then the small bo'ts comes and get enough an' over for their trawls. There, look! there she is: mother sees us; she's wavin' somethin' out o' the fore door! She'll be to the landin'-place quick 's we are."

I looked, and could see a tiny flutter in the doorway, but a quicker signal had made its way from the heart on shore to the heart on the sea.

"How do you suppose she knows it's me?" said Mrs. Todd, with a tender smile on her broad face. "There, you never get over bein' a child long 's you have a mother to go to. Look at the chimney, now; she's gone right in an' brightened up the fire. Well, there, I'm glad mother's well; you'll enjoy seein' her very much."

Mrs. Todd leaned back into her proper position, and the boat trimmed again. She took a firmer grasp of the sheet, and gave an impatient look up at the gaff and the leech[2] of the little sail, and twitched the sheet as if she urged the wind like a horse. There came at once a fresh gust, and we seemed to have doubled our speed. Soon we were near enough to see a tiny figure with handkerchiefed head come down across the field and stand waiting for us at the cove above a curve of pebble beach.

Presently the dory grated on the pebbles, and Johnny Bowden, who had been kept in abeyance during the voyage, sprang out and used manful exertions to haul us up with the next wave, so that Mrs. Todd could make a dry landing.

"You done that very well," she said, mounting to her feet, and coming ashore somewhat stiffly, but with great dignity, refusing our outstretched hands, and returning to possess herself of a bag which had lain at her feet.

"Well, mother, here I be!" she announced with indifference; but they stood and beamed in each other's faces.

"Lookin' pretty well for an old lady, ain't she?" said Mrs.

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1 A sailing vessel that has fore-and-aft sails on two or more masts.

2 A gaff is the wooden pole (spar or mast) that controls the sailing rigging; the leech is the back edge of the sail.

Todd's mother, turning away from her daughter to speak to me. She was a delightful little person herself, with bright eyes and an affectionate air of expectation like a child on a holiday. You felt as if Mrs. Blackett were an old and dear friend before you let go her cordial hand. We all started together up the hill.

"Now don't you haste too fast, mother," said Mrs. Todd warningly; "'t is a far reach o' risin' ground to the fore door, and you won't set an' get your breath when you're once there, but go trotting about. Now don't you go a mite faster than we proceed with this bag an' basket. Johnny, there, 'll fetch up the haddock. I just made one stop to underrun William's trawl till I come to jes' such a fish 's I thought you'd want to make one o' your nice chowders of. I've brought an onion with me that was layin' about on the window-sill at home."

"That's just what I was wantin'," said the hostess. "I give a sigh when you spoke o' chowder, knowin' my onions was out. William forgot to replenish us last time he was to the Landin'. Don't you haste so yourself, Almiry, up this risin' ground. I hear you commencin' to wheeze a'ready."

This mild revenge seemed to afford great pleasure to both giver and receiver. They laughed a little, and looked at each other affectionately, and then at me. Mrs. Todd considerately paused, and faced about to regard the wide sea view. I was glad to stop, being more out of breath than either of my companions, and I prolonged the halt by asking the names of the neighboring islands. There was a fine breeze blowing, which we felt more there on the high land than when we were running before it in the dory.

"Why, this ain't that kitten I saw when I was out last, the one that I said didn't appear likely?" exclaimed Mrs. Todd as we went our way.

"That's the one, Almiry," said her mother. "She always had a likely look to me, an' she's right after her business. I never see such a mouser for one of her age. If 't wan't for William, I never should have housed that other dronin'[1] old thing so long; but he sets by her on account of her havin' a bob tail. I don't deem it advisable to maintain cats just on account of their havin' bob tails; they're like all other curiosities, good for them that wants to see 'em twice. This kitten catches mice for both, an' keeps me respectable as I ain't been for a year. She's a real understandin'

1 An idle person or creature who lives off others; from drones, male bees who do no work and produce no honey.

little help, this kitten is. I picked her from among five Miss Augusta Pernell had over to Burnt Island," said the old woman, trudging along with the kitten close at her skirts. "Augusta, she says to me, 'Why, Mis' Blackett, you've took the homeliest;' an' says I, 'I've got the smartest; I'm satisfied.'"

"I'd trust nobody sooner 'n you to pick out a kitten, mother," said the daughter handsomely, and we went on in peace and harmony.

The house was just before us now, on a green level that looked as if a huge hand had scooped it out of the long green field we had been ascending. A little way above, the dark spruce woods began to climb the top of the hill and cover the seaward slopes of the island. There was just room for the small farm and the forest; we looked down at the fish-house and its rough sheds, and the weirs stretching far out into the water. As we looked upward, the tops of the firs came sharp against the blue sky. There was a great stretch of rough pasture-land round the shoulder of the island to the eastward, and here were all the thick-scattered gray rocks that kept their places, and the gray backs of many sheep that forever wandered and fed on the thin sweet pasturage that fringed the ledges and made soft hollows and strips of green turf like growing velvet. I could see the rich green of bayberry bushes here and there, where the rocks made room. The air was very sweet; one could not help wishing to be a citizen of such a complete and tiny continent and home of fisherfolk.

The house was broad and clean, with a roof that looked heavy on its low walls. It was one of the houses that seem firm-rooted in the ground, as if they were two-thirds below the surface, like icebergs. The front door stood hospitably open in expectation of company, and an orderly vine grew at each side; but our path led to the kitchen door at the house-end, and there grew a mass of gay flowers and greenery, as if they had been swept together by some diligent garden broom into a tangled heap: there were portulacas[1] all along under the lower step and straggling off into the grass, and clustering mallows[2] that crept as near as they dared, like poor relations. I saw the bright eyes and brainless little heads

1 Portulaca, also known as Purslane, is an edible, annual succulent that also, in Greek medicine, was used as a remedy for constipation and for inflammation of the urinary system.

2 Cluster mallow (*Malva verticillata*) is an herbaceous perennial common throughout the northeastern United States; it is often used as a remedy for coughs and colds.

of two half-grown chickens who were snuggled down among the mallows as if they had been chased away from the door more than once, and expected to be again.

"It seems kind o' formal comin' in this way," said Mrs. Todd impulsively, as we passed the flowers and came to the front doorstep; but she was mindful of the proprieties, and walked before us into the best room on the left.

"Why, mother, if you haven't gone an' turned the carpet!" she exclaimed, with something in her voice that spoke of awe and admiration. "When'd you get to it? I s'pose Mis' Addicks come over an' helped you, from White Island Landing?"

"No, she didn't," answered the old woman, standing proudly erect, and making the most of a great moment. "I done it all myself with William's help. He had a spare day, an' took right holt with me; an' 't was all well beat on the grass, an' turned, an' put down again afore we went to bed. I ripped an' sewed over two o' them long breadths.[1] I ain't had such a good night's sleep for two years."

"There, what do you think o' havin' such a mother as that for eighty-six year old?" said Mrs. Todd, standing before us like a large figure of Victory.[2]

As for the mother, she took on a sudden look of youth; you felt as if she promised a great future, and was beginning, not ending, her summers and their happy toils.

"My, my!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd. "I couldn't ha' done it myself, I've got to own it."

"I was much pleased to have it off my mind," said Mrs. Blackett, humbly; "the more so because along at the first of the next week I wasn't very well. I suppose it may have been the change of weather."

Mrs. Todd could not resist a significant glance at me, but, with charming sympathy, she forbore to point the lesson or to connect this illness with its apparent cause. She loomed larger than ever in the little old-fashioned best room, with its few pieces of good furniture and pictures of national interest. The green paper curtains were stamped with conventional landscapes of a foreign

1 Because nineteenth-century carpets were constructed in pieces, Mrs. Blackett has most likely ripped out seams, replaced padding, and then reassembled the pieces.

2 Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, is well represented in classical sculpture, most notably by the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* (third century BCE) housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

order,—castles on inaccessible crags, and lovely lakes with steep wooded shores; under-foot the treasured carpet was covered thick with home-made rugs. There were empty glass lamps and crystallized bouquets of grass[1] and some fine shells on the narrow mantelpiece.

"I was married in this room," said Mrs. Todd unexpectedly; and I heard her give a sigh after she had spoken, as if she could not help the touch of regret that would forever come with all her thoughts of happiness.

"We stood right there between the windows," she added, "and the minister stood here. William wouldn't come in. He was always odd about seein' folks, just 's he is now. I run to meet 'em from a child, an' William, he'd take an' run away."

"I've been the gainer," said the old mother cheerfully. "William has been son an' daughter both since you was married off the island. He's been 'most too satisfied to stop at home 'long o' his old mother, but I always tell 'em I'm the gainer."

We were all moving toward the kitchen as if by common instinct. The best room was too suggestive of serious occasions, and the shades were all pulled down to shut out the summer light and air. It was indeed a tribute to Society to find a room set apart for her behests[2] out there on so apparently neighborless and remote an island. Afternoon visits and evening festivals must be few in such a bleak situation at certain seasons of the year, but Mrs. Blackett was of those who do not live to themselves, and who have long since passed the line that divides mere self-concern from a valued share in whatever Society can give and take. There were those of her neighbors who never had taken the trouble to furnish a best room, but Mrs. Blackett was one who knew the uses of a parlor.

"Yes, do come right out into the old kitchen; I shan't make any stranger of you," she invited us pleasantly, after we had been properly received in the room appointed to formality. "I expect Almiry, here, 'll be driftin' out 'mongst the pasture-weeds quick 's she can find a good excuse. 'T is hot now. You'd better content yourselves till you get nice an' rested, an' 'long after dinner the sea-breeze'll spring up, an' then you can take your walks, an' go up an' see the prospect from the big ledge. Almiry'll want to show

1 Decorative flowers and grasses are made by painting them in an egg white wash and then sprinkling them with sugar.

2 In this context, an urgent command or authoritative request by Society, gendered by Jewett as female.

off everything there is. Then I'll get you a good cup o' tea before you start to go home. The days are plenty long now."

While we were talking in the best room the selected fish had been mysteriously brought up from the shore, and lay all cleaned and ready in an earthen crock on the table.

"I think William might have just stopped an' said a word," remarked Mrs. Todd, pouting with high affront as she caught sight of it. "He's friendly enough when he comes ashore, an' was remarkable social the last time, for him."

"He ain't disposed to be very social with the ladies," explained William's mother, with a delightful glance at me, as if she counted upon my friendship and tolerance. "He's very particular, and he's all in his old fishin'-clothes to-day. He'll want me to tell him everything you said and done, after you've gone. William has very deep affections. He'll want to see you, Almiry. Yes, I guess he'll be in by an' by."

"I'll search for him by 'n' by, if he don't," proclaimed Mrs. Todd, with an air of unalterable resolution. "I know all of his burrows down 'long the shore. I'll catch him by hand 'fore he knows it. I've got some business with William, anyway. I brought forty-two cents with me that was due him for them last lobsters he brought in."

"You can leave it with me," suggested the little old mother, who was already stepping about among her pots and pans in the pantry, and preparing to make the chowder.

I became possessed of a sudden unwonted curiosity in regard to William, and felt that half the pleasure of my visit would be lost if I could not make his interesting acquaintance.

IX. William

Mrs. Todd had taken the onion out of her basket and laid it down upon the kitchen table. "There's Johnny Bowden come with us, you know," she reminded her mother. "He'll be hungry enough to eat his size."

"I've got new doughnuts, dear," said the little old lady. "You don't often catch William 'n' me out o' provisions. I expect you might have chose a somewhat larger fish, but I'll try an' make it do. I shall have to have a few extra potatoes, but there's a field full out there, an' the hoe's leanin' against the well-house, in 'mongst the climbin'-beans." She smiled, and gave her daughter a commanding nod.

"Land sakes alive! Le' 's blow the horn for William," insisted Mrs. Todd, with some excitement. "He needn't break his spirit so far 's to come in. He'll know you need him for something particular, an' then we can call to him as he comes up the path. I won't put him to no pain."

Mrs. Blackett's old face, for the first time, wore a look of trouble, and I found it necessary to counteract the teasing spirit of Almira. It was too pleasant to stay indoors altogether, even in such rewarding companionship; besides, I might meet William; and, straying out presently, I found the hoe by the well-house and an old splint basket at the woodshed door, and also found my way down to the field where there was a great square patch of rough, weedy potato-tops and tall ragweed. One corner was already dug, and I chose a fat-looking hill where the tops were well withered. There is all the pleasure that one can have in gold-digging in finding one's hopes satisfied in the riches of a good hill of potatoes. I longed to go on; but it did not seem frugal to dig any longer after my basket was full, and at last I took my hoe by the middle and lifted the basket to go back up the hill. I was sure that Mrs. Blackett must be waiting impatiently to slice the potatoes into the chowder, layer after layer, with the fish.

"You let me take holt o' that basket, ma'am," said the pleasant, anxious voice behind me.

I turned, startled in the silence of the wide field, and saw an elderly man, bent in the shoulders as fishermen often are, gray-headed and clean-shaven, and with a timid air. It was William. He looked just like his mother, and I had been imagining that he was large and stout like his sister, Almira Todd; and, strange to say, my fancy had led me to picture him not far from thirty and a little loutish. It was necessary instead to pay William the respect due to age.

I accustomed myself to plain facts on the instant, and we said good-morning like old friends. The basket was really heavy, and I put the hoe through its handle and offered him one end; then we moved easily toward the house together, speaking of the fine weather and of mackerel which were reported to be striking in all about the bay. William had been out since three o'clock, and had taken an extra fare of fish. I could feel that Mrs. Todd's eyes were upon us as we approached the house, and although I fell behind in the narrow path, and let William take the basket alone and precede me at some little distance the rest of the way, I could plainly hear her greet him.

"Got round to comin' in, didn't you?" she inquired, with

amusement. "Well, now, that's clever. Didn't know 's I should see you to-day, William, an' I wanted to settle an account."

I felt somewhat disturbed and responsible, but when I joined them they were on most simple and friendly terms. It became evident that, with William, it was the first step that cost, and that, having once joined in social interests, he was able to pursue them with more or less pleasure. He was about sixty, and not young-looking for his years, yet so undying is the spirit of youth, and bashfulness has such a power of survival, that I felt all the time as if one must try to make the occasion easy for some one who was young and new to the affairs of social life. He asked politely if I would like to go up to the great ledge while dinner was getting ready; so, not without a deep sense of pleasure, and a delighted look of surprise from the two hostesses, we started, William and I, as if both of us felt much younger than we looked. Such was the innocence and simplicity of the moment that when I heard Mrs. Todd laughing behind us in the kitchen I laughed too, but William did not even blush. I think he was a little deaf, and he stepped along before me most businesslike and intent upon his errand.

We went from the upper edge of the field above the house into a smooth, brown path among the dark spruces. The hot sun brought out the fragrance of the pitchy bark, and the shade was pleasant as we climbed the hill. William stopped once or twice to show me a great wasps'-nest close by, or some fishhawks'-nests[1] below in a bit of swamp. He picked a few sprigs of late-blooming linnæa[2] as we came out upon an open bit of pasture at the top of the island, and gave them to me without speaking, but he knew as well as I that one could not say half he wished about linnæa. Through this piece of rough pasture ran a huge shape of stone like the great backbone of an enormous creature. At the end, near the woods, we could climb up on it and walk along to the highest point; there above the circle of pointed firs we could look down over all the island, and could see the ocean that circled this and a hundred other bits of island-ground, the mainland shore and all the far horizons. It gave a sudden sense of space, for nothing stopped the eye or hedged one in,—that sense of liberty in space and time which great prospects always give.

"There ain't no such view in the world, I expect," said William proudly, and I hastened to speak my heartfelt tribute of praise; it

1 Ospreys.

2 *Linnaea borealis*, commonly known as Twinflower, is a small woodland shrub.

was impossible not to feel as if an untraveled boy had spoken, and yet one loved to have him value his native heath.

X. Where Pennyroyal Grew

We were a little late to dinner, but Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd were lenient, and we all took our places after William had paused to wash his hands, like a pious Brahmin,[1] at the well, and put on a neat blue coat which he took from a peg behind the kitchen door. Then he resolutely asked a blessing in words that I could not hear, and we ate the chowder and were thankful. The kitten went round and round the table, quite erect, and, holding on by her fierce young claws, she stopped to mew with pathos at each elbow, or darted off to the open door when a song sparrow forgot himself and lit in the grass too near. William did not talk much, but his sister Todd occupied the time and told all the news there was to tell of Dunnet Landing and its coasts, while the old mother listened with delight. Her hospitality was something exquisite; she had the gift which so many women lack, of being able to make themselves and their houses belong entirely to a guest's pleasure,—that charming surrender for the moment of themselves and whatever belongs to them, so that they make a part of one's own life that can never be forgotten. Tact is after all a kind of mindreading, and my hostess held the golden gift. Sympathy is of the mind as well as the heart, and Mrs. Blackett's world and mine were one from the moment we met. Besides, she had that final, that highest gift of heaven, a perfect self-forgetfulness. Sometimes, as I watched her eager, sweet old face, I wondered why she had been set to shine on this lonely island of the northern coast. It must have been to keep the balance true, and make up to all her scattered and depending neighbors for other things which they may have lacked.

When we had finished clearing away the old blue plates, and the kitten had taken care of her share of the fresh haddock, just as we were putting back the kitchen chairs in their places, Mrs. Todd said briskly that she must go up into the pasture now to gather the desired herbs.

"You can stop here an' rest, or you can accompany me," she

1 A Brahmin (or Brahman) is a member of the Hindu scholar/teacher, fire-priest caste, for whom the washing of hands is a religious and ceremonial ritual.

announced. "Mother ought to have her nap, and when we come back she an' William'll sing for you. She admires music," said Mrs. Todd, turning to speak to her mother.

But Mrs. Blackett tried to say that she couldn't sing as she used, and perhaps William wouldn't feel like it. She looked tired, the good old soul, or I should have liked to sit in the peaceful little house while she slept; I had had much pleasant experience of pastures already in her daughter's company. But it seemed best to go with Mrs. Todd, and off we went.

Mrs. Todd carried the gingham bag which she had brought from home, and a small heavy burden in the bottom made it hang straight and slender from her hand. The way was steep, and she soon grew breathless, so that we sat down to rest awhile on a convenient large stone among the bayberry.

"There, I wanted you to see this,—'t is mother's picture," said Mrs. Todd; "'t was taken once when she was up to Portland, soon after she was married. That's me," she added, opening another worn case, and displaying the full face of the cheerful child she looked like still in spite of being past sixty. "And here's William an' father together. I take after father, large and heavy, an' William is like mother's folks, short an' thin. He ought to have made something o' himself, bein' a man an' so like mother; but though he's been very steady to work, an' kept up the farm, an' done his fishin' too right along, he never had mother's snap an' power o' seein' things just as they be. He's got excellent judgment, too," meditated William's sister, but she could not arrive at any satisfactory decision upon what she evidently thought his failure in life. "I think it is well to see any one so happy an' makin' the most of life just as it falls to hand," she said as she began to put the daguerreotypes[1] away again; but I reached out my hand to see her mother's once more, a most flowerlike face of a lovely young woman in quaint dress. There was in the eyes a look of anticipation and joy, a far-off look that sought the horizon; one often sees it in seafaring families, inherited by girls and boys alike from men who spend their lives at sea, and are always watching for distant sails or the first loom of the land. At sea there is nothing to be seen close by, and this has its counterpart in a sailor's character, in the large and brave and patient

1 An early type of photography, named after its French inventor, Louis J.M. Daguerre, in 1839.

traits that are developed, the hopeful pleasantness that one loves so in a seafarer.

When the family pictures were wrapped again in a big handkerchief, we set forward in a narrow footpath and made our way to a lonely place that faced northward, where there was more pasturage and fewer bushes, and we went down to the edge of short grass above some rocky cliffs where the deep sea broke with a great noise, though the wind was down and the water looked quiet a little way from shore. Among the grass grew such pennyroyal as the rest of the world could not provide. There was a fine fragrance in the air as we gathered it sprig by sprig and stepped along carefully, and Mrs. Todd pressed her aromatic nosegay between her hands and offered it to me again and again.

"There's nothin' like it," she said; "oh no, there's no such pennyr'yal as this in the State of Maine. It's the right pattern of the plant, and all the rest I ever see is but an imitation. Don't it do you good?" And I answered with enthusiasm.

"There, dear, I never showed nobody else but mother where to find this place; 't is kind of sainted to me. Nathan, my husband, an' I used to love this place when we was courtin', and"—she hesitated, and then spoke softly—"when he was lost, 't was just off shore tryin' to get in by the short channel out there between Squaw Islands, right in sight o' this headland where we'd set an' made our plans all summer long."

I had never heard her speak of her husband before, but I felt that we were friends now since she had brought me to this place.

"'T was but a dream with us," Mrs. Todd said. "I knew it when he was gone. I knew it"—and she whispered as if she were at confession—"I knew it afore he started to go to sea. My heart was gone out o' my keepin' before I ever saw Nathan; but he loved me well, and he made me real happy, and he died before he ever knew what he'd had to know if we'd lived long together. 'T is very strange about love. No, Nathan never found out, but my heart was troubled when I knew him first. There's more women likes to be loved than there is of those that loves. I spent some happy hours right here. I always liked Nathan, and he never knew. But this pennyr'yal always reminded me, as I'd sit and gather it and hear him talkin'—it always would remind me of—the other one."

She looked away from me, and presently rose and went on by herself. There was something lonely and solitary about her great

determined shape. She might have been Antigone alone on the Theban plain.[1] It is not often given in a noisy world to come to the places of great grief and silence. An absolute, archaic grief possessed this country-woman; she seemed like a renewal of some historic soul, with her sorrows and the remoteness of a daily life busied with rustic simplicities and the scents of primeval herbs.

I was not incompetent at herb-gathering, and after a while, when I had sat long enough waking myself to new thoughts, and reading a page of remembrance with new pleasure, I gathered some bunches, as I was bound to do, and at last we met again higher up the shore, in the plain every-day world we had left behind when we went down to the pennyroyal plot. As we walked together along the high edge of the field we saw a hundred sails about the bay and farther seaward; it was mid-afternoon or after, and the day was coming to an end.

"Yes, they're all makin' towards the shore,—the small craft an' the lobster smacks an' all," said my companion. "We must spend a little time with mother now, just to have our tea, an' then put for home."

"No matter if we lose the wind at sundown; I can row in with Johnny," said I; and Mrs. Todd nodded reassuringly and kept to her steady plod, not quickening her gait even when we saw William come round the corner of the house as if to look for us, and wave his hand and disappear.

"Why, William's right on deck; I didn't know 's we should see any more of him!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd. "Now mother'll put the kettle right on; she's got a good fire goin'." I too could see the blue smoke thicken, and then we both walked a little faster, while Mrs. Todd groped in her full bag of herbs to find the daguerreotypes and be ready to put them in their places.

1 Antigone, whose name means "unbending," is the daughter of King Oedipus and his mother, Jocasta, as well as the protagonist of Sophocles' play, *Antigone* (442 BCE). In it, Antigone defies King Creon's orders and is determined to give her rebellious brother a respectable funeral after his death in battle on the plains of Thebes.

XI. The Old Singers

William was sitting on the side door step, and the old mother was busy making her tea; she gave into my hand an old flowered-glass tea-caddy.[1]

"William thought you'd like to see this, when he was settin' the table. My father brought it to my mother from the island of Tobago;[2] an' here's a pair of beautiful mugs that came with it." She opened the glass door of a little cupboard beside the chimney. "These I call my best things, dear," she said. "You'd laugh to see how we enjoy 'em Sunday nights in winter: we have a real company tea 'stead o' livin' right along just the same, an' I make somethin' good for a s'prise an' put on some o' my preserves, an' we get a' talkin' together an' have real pleasant times."

Mrs. Todd laughed indulgently, and looked to see what I thought of such childishness.

"I wish I could be here some Sunday evening," said I.

"William an' me'll be talkin' about you an' thinkin' o' this nice day," said Mrs. Blackett affectionately, and she glanced at William, and he looked up bravely and nodded. I began to discover that he and his sister could not speak their deeper feelings before each other.

"Now I want you an' mother to sing," said Mrs. Todd abruptly, with an air of command, and I gave William much sympathy in his evident distress.

"After I've had my cup o' tea, dear," answered the old hostess cheerfully; and so we sat down and took our cups and made merry while they lasted. It was impossible not to wish to stay on forever at Green Island, and I could not help saying so.

"I'm very happy here, both winter an' summer," said old Mrs. Blackett. "William an' I never wish for any other home, do we, William? I'm glad you find it pleasant; I wish you'd come an' stay, dear, whenever you feel inclined. But here's Almiry; I always think Providence was kind to plot an' have her husband leave her a good house where she really belonged. She'd been very restless if she'd had to continue here on Green Island. You wanted more scope, didn't you, Almiry, an' to live in a large place where more things grew? Sometimes folks wonders that we don't live together; perhaps we shall some time," and a shadow of sadness

1 A box, jar, or canister that holds tea.

2 The smaller and southernmost of the two islands that make up the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean Sea.

and apprehension flitted across her face. "The time o' sickness an' failin' has got to come to all. But Almiry's got an herb that's good for everything." She smiled as she spoke, and looked bright again.

"There's some herb that's good for everybody, except for them that thinks they're sick when they ain't," announced Mrs. Todd, with a truly professional air of finality. "Come, William, let's have Sweet Home,[1] an' then mother'll sing Cupid an' the Bee for us."[2]

Then followed a most charming surprise. William mastered his timidity and began to sing. His voice was a little faint and frail, like the family daguerreotypes, but it was a tenor voice, and perfectly true and sweet. I have never heard Home, Sweet Home sung as touchingly and seriously as he sang it; he seemed to make it quite new; and when he paused for a moment at the end of the first line and began the next, the old mother joined him and they sang together, she missing only the higher notes, where he seemed to lend his voice to hers for the moment and carry on her very note and air. It was the silent man's real and only means of expression, and one could have listened forever, and have asked for more and more songs of old Scotch and English inheritance and the best that have lived from the ballad music of the war. Mrs. Todd kept time visibly, and sometimes audibly, with her ample foot. I saw the tears in her eyes sometimes, when I could see beyond the tears in mine. But at last the songs ended and the time came to say good-by; it was the end of a great pleasure.

Mrs. Blackett, the dear old lady, opened the door of her bedroom while Mrs. Todd was tying up the herb bag, and William had gone down to get the boat ready and to blow the horn for Johnny Bowden, who had joined a roving boat party who were off the shore lobstering.

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1 "Home, Sweet Home," the popular song from *Clari, The Maid of Milan* by John Howard Payne (1791-1852), features the famous refrain, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

2 A popular song of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that appears in two songbooks of the period, *The American Musical Miscellany* (Northampton, 1798) and *The Theatrical Songster and Musical Companion* (1815). These citations are drawn from Cornell University Professor James Hutton's article, "Cupid and the Bee," *PMLA* 56.4 (December 1941): 1036-58, which traces the evolution of this lyric from the Greek poets Anacreon (554-469 BCE) and Theocritus (310-250 BCE), to the Renaissance in England (Edmund Spenser, 1552-99) and then to the eighteenth-century British composer, John Addison (1764-1844).

I went to the door of the bedroom, and thought how pleasant it looked, with its pink-and-white patchwork quilt and the brown unpainted paneling of its woodwork.

"Come right in, dear," she said. "I want you to set down in my old quilted rockin'-chair there by the window; you'll say it's the prettiest view in the house. I set there a good deal to rest me and when I want to read."

There was a worn red Bible on the lightstand, and Mrs. Blackett's heavy silver-bowed glasses; her thimble was on the narrow window-ledge, and folded carefully on the table was a thick striped-cotton shirt that she was making for her son. Those dear old fingers and their loving stitches, that heart which had made the most of everything that needed love! Here was the real home, the heart of the old house on Green Island! I sat in the rocking-chair, and felt that it was a place of peace, the little brown bedroom, and the quiet outlook upon field and sea and sky.

I looked up, and we understood each other without speaking. "I shall like to think o' your settin' here to-day," said Mrs. Blackett. "I want you to come again. It has been so pleasant for William."

The wind served us all the way home, and did not fall or let the sail slacken until we were close to the shore. We had a generous freight of lobsters in the boat, and new potatoes which William had put aboard, and what Mrs. Todd proudly called a full "kag" of prime number one salted mackerel; and when we landed we had to make business arrangements to have these conveyed to her house in a wheelbarrow.

I never shall forget the day at Green Island. The town of Dunnet Landing seemed large and noisy and oppressive as we came ashore. Such is the power of contrast; for the village was so still that I could hear the shy whippoorwills[1] singing that night as I lay awake in my downstairs bedroom, and the scent of Mrs. Todd's herb garden under the window blew in again and again with every gentle rising of the sea-breeze.

XII. A Strange Sail

Except for a few stray guests, islanders or from the inland country, to whom Mrs. Todd offered the hospitalities of a single meal, we were quite by ourselves all summer; and when there

1 Named after its call, the whippoorwill is a North American nocturnal bird called a nightjar.

were signs of invasion, late in July, and a certain Mrs. Fosdick appeared like a strange sail on the far horizon, I suffered much from apprehension. I had been living in the quaint little house with as much comfort and unconsciousness as if it were a larger body, or a double shell, in whose simple convolutions Mrs. Todd and I had secreted ourselves, until some wandering hermit crab of a visitor marked the little spare room for her own. Perhaps now and then a castaway on a lonely desert island dreads the thought of being rescued. I heard of Mrs. Fosdick for the first time with a selfish sense of objection; but after all, I was still vacation-tenant of the schoolhouse, where I could always be alone, and it was impossible not to sympathize with Mrs. Todd, who, in spite of some preliminary grumbling, was really delighted with the prospect of entertaining an old friend.

For nearly a month we received occasional news of Mrs. Fosdick, who seemed to be making a royal progress[1] from house to house in the inland neighborhood, after the fashion of Queen Elizabeth.[2] One Sunday after another came and went, disappointing Mrs. Todd in the hope of seeing her guest at church and fixing the day for the great visit to begin; but Mrs. Fosdick was not ready to commit herself to a date. An assurance of "some time this week" was not sufficiently definite from a free-footed housekeeper's point of view, and Mrs. Todd put aside all herb-gathering plans, and went through the various stages of expectation, provocation, and despair. At last she was ready to believe that Mrs. Fosdick must have forgotten her promise and returned to her home, which was vaguely said to be over Thomaston[3] way. But one evening, just as the supper-table was cleared and "readied up," and Mrs. Todd had put her large apron over her head and stepped forth for an evening stroll in the garden, the unexpected happened. She heard the sound of wheels, and gave an excited cry to me, as I sat by the window, that Mrs. Fosdick was coming right up the street.

"She may not be considerate, but she's dreadful good company," said Mrs. Todd hastily, coming back a few steps from the neighborhood of the gate. "No, she ain't a mite considerate, but there's a small lobster left over from your tea; yes, it's a real

1 A ceremonial tour of the kingdom by a monarch and his or her entourage.

2 Queen Elizabeth I (1553-1603) ruled England and Ireland from 1558 until her death.

3 Incorporated in 1777, Thomaston is a seaport town on the St. George River in central Maine.

mercy there's a lobster. Susan Fosdick might just as well have passed the compliment o' comin' an hour ago."

"Perhaps she has had her supper," I ventured to suggest, sharing the housekeeper's anxiety, and meekly conscious of an inconsiderate appetite for my own supper after a long expedition up the bay. There were so few emergencies of any sort at Dunnet Landing that this one appeared overwhelming.

"No, she's rode 'way over from Nahum Brayton's place. I expect they were busy on the farm, and couldn't spare the horse in proper season. You just sly out an' set the teakittle on again, dear, an' drop in a good han'ful o' chips; the fire's all alive. I'll take her right up to lay off her things, an' she'll be occupied with explanations an' gettin' her bunnit off, so you'll have plenty o' time. She's one I shouldn't like to have find me unprepared."

Mrs. Fosdick was already at the gate, and Mrs. Todd now turned with an air of complete surprise and delight to welcome her.

"Why, Susan Fosdick," I heard her exclaim in a fine unhindered voice, as if she were calling across a field, "I come near giving of you up! I was afraid you'd gone an' 'portioned out my visit to somebody else. I s'pose you've been to supper?"

"Lor', no, I ain't, Almiry Todd," said Mrs. Fosdick cheerfully, as she turned, laden with bags and bundles, from making her adieux to the boy driver. "I ain't had a mite o' supper, dear. I've been lottin' all the way on a cup o' that best tea o' yourn,—some o' that Oolong[1] you keep in the little chist. I don't want none o' your useful herbs."

"I keep that tea for ministers' folks," gayly responded Mrs. Todd. "Come right along in, Susan Fosdick. I declare if you ain't the same old sixpence!"

As they came up the walk together, laughing like girls, I fled, full of cares, to the kitchen, to brighten the fire and be sure that the lobster, sole dependence of a late supper, was well out of reach of the cat. There proved to be fine reserves of wild raspberries and bread and butter, so that I regained my composure, and waited impatiently for my own share of this illustrious visit to begin. There was an instant sense of high festivity in the evening air from the moment when our guest had so frankly demanded the Oolong tea.

The great moment arrived. I was formally presented at the

1 A traditional Chinese tea residing in the middle of the spectrum regarding both color and taste between green and black.

stair-foot, and the two friends passed on to the kitchen, where I soon heard a hospitable clink of crockery and the brisk stirring of a tea-cup. I sat in my high-backed rocking-chair by the window in the front room with an unreasonable feeling of being left out, like the child who stood at the gate in Hans Andersen's story.[1] Mrs. Fosdick did not look, at first sight, like a person of great social gifts. She was a serious-looking little bit of an old woman, with a birdlike nod of the head. I had often been told that she was the "best hand in the world to make a visit,"—as if to visit were the highest of vocations; that everybody wished for her, while few could get her; and I saw that Mrs. Todd felt a comfortable sense of distinction in being favored with the company of this eminent person who "knew just how." It was certainly true that Mrs. Fosdick gave both her hostess and me a warm feeling of enjoyment and expectation, as if she had the power of social suggestion to all neighboring minds.

The two friends did not reappear for at least an hour. I could hear their busy voices, loud and low by turns, as they ranged from public to confidential topics. At last Mrs. Todd kindly remembered me and returned, giving my door a ceremonious knock before she stepped in, with the small visitor in her wake. She reached behind her and took Mrs. Fosdick's hand as if she were young and bashful, and gave her a gentle pull forward.

"There, I don't know whether you're goin' to take to each other or not; no, nobody can't tell whether you'll suit each other, but I expect you'll get along some way, both having seen the world," said our affectionate hostess. "You can inform Mis' Fosdick how we found the folks out to Green Island the other day. She's always been well acquainted with mother. I'll slip out now an' put away the supper things an' set my bread to rise, if you'll both excuse me. You can come an' keep me company when you get ready, either or both." And Mrs. Todd, large and amiable, disappeared and left us.

Being furnished not only with a subject of conversation, but with a safe refuge in the kitchen in case of incompatibility, Mrs. Fosdick and I sat down, prepared to make the best of each other. I soon discovered that she, like many of the elder women of the coast, had spent a part of her life at sea, and was full of a good traveler's curiosity and enlightenment. By the time we thought it discreet to join our hostess we were already sincere friends.

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1 A common motif in the stories of this Danish author (1805-75), including "The Princess and the Pea" (1835) and "The Snow Queen" (1845).

You may speak of a visit's setting in as well as a tide's, and it was impossible, as Mrs. Todd whispered to me, not to be pleased at the way this visit was setting in; a new impulse and refreshing of the social currents and seldom visited bays of memory appeared to have begun. Mrs. Fosdick had been the mother of a large family of sons and daughters,—sailors and sailors' wives,—and most of them had died before her. I soon grew more or less acquainted with the histories of all their fortunes and misfortunes, and subjects of an intimate nature were no more withheld from my ears than if I had been a shell on the mantelpiece. Mrs. Fosdick was not without a touch of dignity and elegance; she was fashionable in her dress, but it was a curiously well-preserved provincial fashion of some years back. In a wider sphere one might have called her a woman of the world, with her unexpected bits of modern knowledge, but Mrs. Todd's wisdom was an intimation of truth itself. She might belong to any age, like an idyl of Theocritus;[1] but while she always understood Mrs. Fosdick, that entertaining pilgrim could not always understand Mrs. Todd.

That very first evening my friends plunged into a borderless sea of reminiscences and personal news. Mrs. Fosdick had been staying with a family who owned the farm where she was born, and she had visited every sunny knoll and shady field corner; but when she said that it might be for the last time, I detected in her tone something expectant of the contradiction which Mrs. Todd promptly offered.

"Almiry," said Mrs. Fosdick, with sadness, "you may say what you like, but I am one of nine brothers and sisters brought up on the old place, and we're all dead but me."

"Your sister Dailey ain't gone, is she? Why, no, Louisa ain't gone!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd, with surprise. "Why, I never heard of that occurrence!"

"Yes'm; she passed away last October, in Lynn.[2] She had made her distant home in Vermont State, but she was making a visit to her youngest daughter. Louisa was the only one of my family whose funeral I wasn't able to attend, but 't was a mere

1 Theocritus (310-250 BCE) is known as the creator of ancient Greek pastoral poetry.

2 Lynn, Massachusetts by the nineteenth century had developed into an industrial town, evolving from the tannery and shoe-making industries that began in 1635.

accident. All the rest of us were settled right about home. I thought it was very slack of 'em in Lynn not to fetch her to the old place; but when I came to hear about it, I learned that they'd recently put up a very elegant monument, and my sister Dailey was always great for show. She'd just been out to see the monument the week before she was taken down, and admired it so much that they felt sure of her wishes."

"So she's really gone, and the funeral was up to Lynn!" repeated Mrs. Todd, as if to impress the sad fact upon her mind. "She was some years younger than we be, too. I recollect the first day she ever came to school; 't was that first year mother sent me inshore to stay with aunt Topham's folks and get my schooling. You fetched little Louisa to school one Monday mornin' in a pink dress an' her long curls, and she set between you an' me, and got cryin' after a while, so the teacher sent us home with her at recess."

"She was scared of seeing so many children about her; there was only her and me and brother John at home then; the older boys were to sea with father, an' the rest of us wa'n't born," explained Mrs. Fosdick. "That next fall we all went to sea together. Mother was uncertain till the last minute, as one may say. The ship was waiting orders, but the baby that then was, was born just in time, and there was a long spell of extra bad weather, so mother got about again before they had to sail, an' we all went. I remember my clothes were all left ashore in the east chamber in a basket where mother 'd took them out o' my chist o' drawers an' left 'em ready to carry aboard. She didn't have nothing aboard, of her own, that she wanted to cut up for me, so when my dress wore out she just put me into a spare suit o' John's, jacket and trousers. I wasn't but eight years old an' he was most seven and large of his age. Quick as we made a port she went right ashore an' fitted me out pretty, but we was bound for the East Indies[1] and didn't put in anywhere for a good while. So I had quite a spell o' freedom. Mother made my new skirt long because I was growing, and I poked about the deck after that, real discouraged, feeling the hem at my heels every minute, and as if youth was past and gone. I liked the trousers best; I used to climb the riggin' with 'em and frighten mother till she said an' vowed she'd never take me to sea again."

1 The Indian subcontinent and the Malay Archipelago.

I thought by the polite absent-minded smile on Mrs. Todd's face this was no new story.

"Little Louisa was a beautiful child; yes, I always thought Louisa was very pretty," Mrs. Todd said. "She was a dear little girl in those days. She favored your mother; the rest of you took after your father's folks."

"We did certain," agreed Mrs. Fosdick, rocking steadily. "There, it does seem so pleasant to talk with an old acquaintance that knows what you know. I see so many of these new folks nowadays, that seem to have neither past nor future. Conversation's got to have some root in the past, or else you've got to explain every remark you make, an' it wears a person out."

Mrs. Todd gave a funny little laugh. "Yes'm, old friends is always best, 'less you can catch a new one that's fit to make an old one out of," she said, and we gave an affectionate glance at each other which Mrs. Fosdick could not have understood, being the latest comer to the house.

XIII. Poor Joanna

One evening my ears caught a mysterious allusion which Mrs. Todd made to Shell-heap Island. It was a chilly night of cold northeasterly rain, and I made a fire for the first time in the Franklin stove[1] in my room, and begged my two housemates to come in and keep me company. The weather had convinced Mrs. Todd that it was time to make a supply of cough-drops, and she had been bringing forth herbs from dark and dry hiding-places, until now the pungent dust and odor of them had resolved themselves into one mighty flavor of spearmint that came from a simmering caldron of syrup in the kitchen. She called it done, and well done, and had ostentatiously left it to cool, and taken her knitting-work because Mrs. Fosdick was busy with hers. They sat in the two rocking-chairs, the small woman and the large one, but now and then I could see that Mrs. Todd's thoughts remained

1 Also called a circulating stove, the Franklin stove is named after its inventor, Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), who created it to address the alarming number of house fires blamed upon old stoves. Franklin developed a new style of stove, with a hoodlike enclosure in the front and an airbox in the rear, which generated a more efficient fire, one that used one quarter as much wood and produced twice as much heat.

with the cough-drops. The time of gathering herbs was nearly over, but the time of syrups and cordials had begun.

The heat of the open fire made us a little drowsy, but something in the way Mrs. Todd spoke of Shell-heap Island waked my interest. I waited to see if she would say any more, and then took a roundabout way back to the subject by saying what was first in my mind: that I wished the Green Island family were there to spend the evening with us,—Mrs. Todd's mother and her brother William.

Mrs. Todd smiled, and drummed on the arm of the rocking-chair. "Might scare William to death," she warned me; and Mrs. Fosdick mentioned her intention of going out to Green Island to stay two or three days, if the wind didn't make too much sea.

"Where is Shell-heap Island?" I ventured to ask, seizing the opportunity.

"Bears nor'east somewheres about three miles from Green Island; right off-shore, I should call it about eight miles out," said Mrs. Todd. "You never was there, dear; 't is off the thoroughfares, and a very bad place to land at best."

"I should think 't was," agreed Mrs. Fosdick, smoothing down her black silk apron. "'T is a place worth visitin' when you once get there. Some o' the old folks was kind o' fearful about it. 'T was 'counted a great place in old Indian times; you can pick up their stone tools 'most any time if you hunt about. There's a beautiful spring o' water, too. Yes, I remember when they used to tell queer stories about Shell-heap Island. Some said 't was a great bangeing-place[1] for the Indians, and an old chief resided there once that ruled the winds; and others said they'd always heard that once the Indians come down from up country an' left a captive there without any bo't, an' 't was too far to swim across to Black Island, so called, an' he lived there till he perished."

"I've heard say he walked the island after that, and sharp-sighted folks could see him an' lose him like one o' them citizens Cap'n Littlepage was acquainted with up to the north pole," announced Mrs. Todd grimly. "Anyway, there was Indians,—you can see their shell-heap that named the island; and I've heard myself that 't was one o' their cannibal

1 Still used in contemporary Maine speech, bangeing means to hang out, and a "bangeing-place" is a place where people or animals (as the jay-birds in Jewett's "A White Heron," 1886) gather.

places,[1] but I never could believe it. There never was no cannibals on the coast o' Maine. All the Indians o' these regions are tame-looking folks."

"Sakes alive, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Fosdick. "Ought to see them painted savages I've seen when I was young out in the South Sea Islands! That was the time for folks to travel, 'way back in the old whalin' days!"

"Whalin' must have been dull for a lady, hardly ever makin' a lively port, and not takin' in any mixed cargoes," said Mrs. Todd. "I never desired to go a whalin' v'y'ge myself."

"I used to return feelin' very slack an' behind the times, 't is true," explained Mrs. Fosdick, "but 't was excitin', an' we always done extra well, and felt rich when we did get ashore. I liked the variety. There, how times have changed; how few seafarin' families there are left! What a lot o' queer folks there used to be about here, anyway, when we was young, Almiry. Everybody's just like everybody else, now; nobody to laugh about, and nobody to cry about."

It seemed to me that there were peculiarities of character in the region of Dunnet Landing yet, but I did not like to interrupt.

"Yes," said Mrs. Todd after a moment of meditation, "there was certain a good many curiosities of human natur' in this neighborhood years ago. There was more energy then, and in some the energy took a singular turn. In these days the young folks is all copy-cats, 'fraid to death they won't be all just alike; as for the old folks, they pray for the advantage o' bein' a little different."

"I ain't heard of a copy-cat this great many years," said Mrs. Fosdick, laughing; "'t was a favorite term o' my grandfather's. No, I wa'n't thinking o' those things, but of them strange straying creatur's that used to rove the country. You don't see them now, or the ones that used to hive away in their own houses with some strange notion or other."

I thought again of Captain Littlepage, but my companions were not reminded of his name; and there was brother William at Green Island, whom we all three knew.

"I was talking o' poor Joanna the other day. I hadn't thought

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1 American historian Francis Parkman (1823-93) disseminated stories of Native American cannibalism among the New England Indian tribes in Chapters 11 and 16 of his work, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (1867). Contemporary historians have since repudiated Parkman's claims.

of her for a great while," said Mrs. Fosdick abruptly. "Mis' Brayton an' I recalled her as we sat together sewing. She was one o' your peculiar persons, wa'n't she? Speaking of such persons," she turned to explain to me, "there was a sort of a nun or hermit person lived out there for years all alone on Shell-heap Island. Miss Joanna Todd, her name was,—a cousin o' Almiry's late husband."

I expressed my interest, but as I glanced at Mrs. Todd I saw that she was confused by sudden affectionate feeling and unmistakable desire for reticence.

"I never want to hear Joanna laughed about," she said anxiously.

"Nor I," answered Mrs. Fosdick reassuringly. "She was crossed in love,—that was all the matter to begin with; but as I look back, I can see that Joanna was one doomed from the first to fall into a melancholy. She retired from the world for good an' all, though she was a well-off woman. All she wanted was to get away from folks; she thought she wasn't fit to live with anybody, and wanted to be free. Shell-heap Island come to her from her father, and first thing folks knew she'd gone off out there to live, and left word she didn't want no company. 'T was a bad place to get to, unless the wind an' tide were just right; 't was hard work to make a landing."

"What time of year was this?" I asked.

"Very late in the summer," said Mrs. Fosdick. "No, I never could laugh at Joanna, as some did. She set everything by the young man, an' they were going to marry in about a month, when he got bewitched with a girl 'way up the bay, and married her, and went off to Massachusetts. He wasn't well thought of,—there were those who thought Joanna's money was what had tempted him; but she'd given him her whole heart, an' she wa'n't so young as she had been. All her hopes were built on marryin', an' havin' a real home and somebody to look to; she acted just like a bird when its nest is spoilt. The day after she heard the news she was in dreadful woe, but the next she came to herself very quiet, and took the horse and wagon, and drove fourteen miles to the lawyer's, and signed a paper givin' her half of the farm to her brother. They never had got along very well together, but he didn't want to sign it, till she acted so distressed that he gave in. Edward Todd's wife was a good woman, who felt very bad indeed, and used every argument with Joanna; but Joanna took a poor old boat that had been her father's and lo'ded in a few things, and off she put all alone, with a good land breeze, right

out to sea. Edward Todd ran down to the beach, an' stood there cryin' like a boy to see her go, but she was out o' hearin'. She never stepped foot on the mainland again long as she lived."

"How large an island is it? How did she manage in winter?" I asked.

"Perhaps thirty acres, rocks and all," answered Mrs. Todd, taking up the story gravely. "There can't be much of it that the salt spray don't fly over in storms. No, 't is a dreadful small place to make a world of; it has a different look from any of the other islands, but there's a sheltered cove on the south side, with mud-flats across one end of it at low water where there's excellent clams, and the big shell-heap keeps some o' the wind off a little house her father took the trouble to build when he was a young man. They said there was an old house built o' logs there before that, with a kind of natural cellar in the rock under it. He used to stay out there days to a time, and anchor a little sloop he had, and dig clams to fill it, and sail up to Portland. They said the dealers always gave him an extra price, the clams were so noted. Joanna used to go out and stay with him. They were always great companions, so she knew just what 't was out there. There was a few sheep that belonged to her brother an' her, but she bargained for him to come and get them on the edge o' cold weather. Yes, she desired him to come for the sheep; an' his wife thought perhaps Joanna'd return, but he said no, an' lo'ded the bo't with warm things an' what he thought she'd need through the winter. He come home with the sheep an' left the other things by the house, but she never so much as looked out o' the window. She done it for a penance. She must have wanted to see Edward by that time."

Mrs. Fosdick was fidgeting with eagerness to speak.

"Some thought the first cold snap would set her ashore, but she always remained," concluded Mrs. Todd soberly.

"Talk about the men not having any curiosity!" exclaimed Mrs. Fosdick scornfully. "Why, the waters round Shell-heap Island were white with sails all that fall. 'T was never called no great of a fishin'-ground before. Many of 'em made excuse to go ashore to get water at the spring; but at last she spoke to a bo't-load, very dignified and calm, and said that she'd like it better if they'd make a practice of getting water to Black Island or somewheres else and leave her alone, except in case of accident or trouble. But there was one man who had always set everything by her from a boy. He'd have married her if the other hadn't come about an' spoilt his chance, and he used to get close to the island,

before light, on his way out fishin', and throw a little bundle 'way up the green slope front o' the house. His sister told me she happened to see, the first time, what a pretty choice he made o' useful things that a woman would feel lost without. He stood off fishin', and could see them in the grass all day, though sometimes she'd come out and walk right by them. There was other bo'ts near, out after mackerel. But early next morning his present was gone. He didn't presume too much, but once he took her a nice firkin[1] o' things he got up to Portland, and when spring come he landed her a hen and chickens in a nice little coop. There was a good many old friends had Joanna on their minds."

"Yes," said Mrs. Todd, losing her sad reserve in the growing sympathy of these reminiscences. "How everybody used to notice whether there was smoke out of the chimney! The Black Island folks could see her with their spy-glass, and if they'd ever missed getting some sign o' life they'd have sent notice to her folks. But after the first year or two Joanna was more and more forgotten as an every-day charge. Folks lived very simple in those days, you know," she continued, as Mrs. Fosdick's knitting was taking much thought at the moment. "I expect there was always plenty of driftwood thrown up, and a poor failin' patch of spruces covered all the north side of the island, so she always had something to burn. She was very fond of workin' in the garden ashore, and that first summer she began to till the little field out there, and raised a nice parcel o' potatoes. She could fish, o' course, and there was all her clams an' lobsters. You can always live well in any wild place by the sea when you'd starve to death up country, except 't was berry time. Joanna had berries out there, blackberries at least, and there was a few herbs in case she needed them. Mullein[2] in great quantities and a plant o' wormwood I remember seeing once when I stayed there, long before she fled out to Shell-heap. Yes, I recall the wormwood, which is always a planted herb, so there must have been folks there before the Todds' day. A growin' bush makes the best gravestone; I expect that wormwood always stood for somebody's solemn monument. Catnip,[3] too, is a very endurin' herb about an old place."

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1 An Old English word that denotes a specific volume. It is drawn from the Dutch word, *vierdekijn,* which means fourth, or a fourth of a full-size barrel.

2 Great mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) is used as a remedy for sore throat, cough, and lung diseases.

3 Known for its stimulating effect on cats, catnip or catmint is from the genus *Nepeta* and is common throughout North America as a weed.

"But what I want to know is what she did for other things," interrupted Mrs. Fosdick. "Almiry, what did she do for clothin' when she needed to replenish, or risin' for her bread, or the piece-bag[1] that no woman can live long without?"

"Or company," suggested Mrs. Todd. "Joanna was one that loved her friends. There must have been a terrible sight o' long winter evenin's that first year."

"There was her hens," suggested Mrs. Fosdick, after reviewing the melancholy situation. "She never wanted the sheep after that first season. There wa'n't no proper pasture for sheep after the June grass was past, and she ascertained the fact and couldn't bear to see them suffer; but the chickens done well. I remember sailin' by one spring afternoon, an' seein' the coops out front o' the house in the sun. How long was it before you went out with the minister? You were the first ones that ever really got ashore to see Joanna."

I had been reflecting upon a state of society which admitted such personal freedom and a voluntary hermitage. There was something mediæval in the behavior of poor Joanna Todd under a disappointment of the heart. The two women had drawn closer together, and were talking on, quite unconscious of a listener.

"Poor Joanna!" said Mrs. Todd again, and sadly shook her head as if there were things one could not speak about.

"I called her a great fool," declared Mrs. Fosdick, with spirit, "but I pitied her then, and I pity her far more now. Some other minister would have been a great help to her,—one that preached self-forgetfulness and doin' for others to cure our own ills; but Parson Dimmick was a vague person, well meanin', but very numb in his feelin's. I don't suppose at that troubled time Joanna could think of any way to mend her troubles except to run off and hide."

"Mother used to say she didn't see how Joanna lived without having nobody to do for, getting her own meals and tending her own poor self day in an' day out," said Mrs. Todd sorrowfully.

"There was the hens," repeated Mrs. Fosdick kindly. "I expect she soon came to makin' folks o' them. No, I never went to work to blame Joanna, as some did. She was full o' feeling, and her troubles hurt her more than she could bear. I see it all now as I couldn't when I was young."

"I suppose in old times they had their shut-up convents for just such folks," said Mrs. Todd, as if she and her friend had dis-

1 A cloth bag in which women kept scraps of material to use as quilt pieces.

agreed about Joanna once, and were now in happy harmony. She seemed to speak with new openness and freedom. "Oh yes, I was only too pleased when the Reverend Mr. Dimmick invited me to go out with him. He hadn't been very long in the place when Joanna left home and friends. 'T was one day that next summer after she went, and I had been married early in the spring. He felt that he ought to go out and visit her. She was a member of the church, and might wish to have him consider her spiritual state. I wa'n't so sure o' that, but I always liked Joanna, and I'd come to be her cousin by marriage. Nathan an' I had conversed about goin' out to pay her a visit, but he got his chance to sail sooner 'n he expected. He always thought everything of her, and last time he come home, knowing nothing of her change, he brought her a beautiful coral pin from a port he'd touched at somewheres up the Mediterranean. So I wrapped the little box in a nice piece of paper and put it in my pocket, and picked her a bunch of fresh lemon balm, and off we started."

Mrs. Fosdick laughed. "I remember hearin' about your trials on the v'y'ge," she said.

"Why, yes," continued Mrs. Todd in her company manner. "I picked her the balm, an' we started. Why, yes, Susan, the minister liked to have cost me my life that day. He would fasten the sheet, though I advised against it. He said the rope was rough an' cut his hand. There was a fresh breeze, an' he went on talking rather high flown, an' I felt some interested. All of a sudden there come up a gust, and he give a screech and stood right up and called for help, 'way out there to sea. I knocked him right over into the bottom o' the bo't, getting by to catch hold of the sheet an' untie it. He wasn't but a little man; I helped him right up after the squall passed, and made a handsome apology to him, but he did act kind o' offended."

"I do think they ought not to settle them landlocked folks in parishes where they're liable to be on the water," insisted Mrs. Fosdick. "Think of the families in our parish that was scattered all about the bay, and what a sight o' sails you used to see, in Mr. Dimmick's day, standing across to the mainland on a pleasant Sunday morning, filled with church-going folks, all sure to want him some time or other! You couldn't find no doctor that would stand up in the boat and screech if a flaw struck her."

"Old Dr. Bennett had a beautiful sailboat, didn't he?" responded Mrs. Todd. "And how well he used to brave the weather! Mother always said that in time o' trouble that tall white sail used to look like an angel's wing comin' over the sea to them

that was in pain. Well, there's a difference in gifts. Mr. Dimmick was not without light."

"'T was light o' the moon, then," snapped Mrs. Fosdick; "he was pompous enough, but I never could remember a single word he said. There, go on, Mis' Todd; I forget a great deal about that day you went to see poor Joanna."

"I felt she saw us coming, and knew us a great way off; yes, I seemed to feel it within me," said our friend, laying down her knitting. "I kept my seat, and took the bo't inshore without saying a word; there was a short channel that I was sure Mr. Dimmick wasn't acquainted with, and the tide was very low. She never came out to warn us off nor anything, and I thought, as I hauled the bo't up on a wave and let the Reverend Mr. Dimmick step out, that it was somethin' gained to be safe ashore. There was a little smoke out o' the chimney o' Joanna's house, and it did look sort of homelike and pleasant with wild mornin'-glory vines trained up; an' there was a plot o' flowers under the front window, portulacas and things. I believe she'd made a garden once, when she was stopping there with her father, and some things must have seeded in. It looked as if she might have gone over to the other side of the island. 'T was neat and pretty all about the house, and a lovely day in July. We walked up from the beach together very sedate, and I felt for poor Nathan's little pin to see if 't was safe in my dress pocket. All of a sudden Joanna come right to the fore door and stood there, not sayin' a word."

XIV. The Hermitage

My companions and I had been so intent upon the subject of the conversation that we had not heard any one open the gate, but at this moment, above the noise of the rain, we heard a loud knocking. We were all startled as we sat by the fire, and Mrs. Todd rose hastily and went to answer the call, leaving her rocking-chair in violent motion. Mrs. Fosdick and I heard an anxious voice at the door speaking of a sick child, and Mrs. Todd's kind, motherly voice inviting the messenger in: then we waited in silence. There was a sound of heavy dropping of rain from the eaves, and the distant roar and undertone of the sea. My thoughts flew back to the lonely woman on her outer island; what separation from humankind she must have felt, what terror and sadness, even in a summer storm like this!

"You send right after the doctor if she ain't better in half an hour," said Mrs. Todd to her worried customer as they parted; and I felt a warm sense of comfort in the evident resources of even so small a neighborhood, but for the poor hermit Joanna there was no neighbor on a winter night.

"How did she look?" demanded Mrs. Fosdick, without preface, as our large hostess returned to the little room with a mist about her from standing long in the wet doorway, and the sudden draught of her coming beat out the smoke and flame from the Franklin stove. "How did poor Joanna look?"

"She was the same as ever, except I thought she looked smaller," answered Mrs. Todd after thinking a moment; perhaps it was only a last considering thought about her patient. "Yes, she was just the same, and looked very nice, Joanna did. I had been married since she left home, an' she treated me like her own folks. I expected she'd look strange, with her hair turned gray in a night or somethin', but she wore a pretty gingham dress I'd often seen her wear before she went away; she must have kept it nice for best in the afternoons. She always had beautiful, quiet manners. I remember she waited till we were close to her, and then kissed me real affectionate, and inquired for Nathan before she shook hands with the minister, and then she invited us both in. 'T was the same little house her father had built him when he was a bachelor, with one livin'-room, and a little mite of a bedroom out of it where she slept, but 't was neat as a ship's cabin. There was some old chairs, an' a seat made of a long box that might have held boat tackle an' things to lock up in his fishin' days, and a good enough stove so anybody could cook and keep warm in cold weather. I went over once from home and stayed 'most a week with Joanna when we was girls, and those young happy days rose up before me. Her father was busy all day fishin' or clammin'; he was one o' the pleasantest men in the world, but Joanna's mother had the grim streak, and never knew what 't was to be happy. The first minute my eyes fell upon Joanna's face that day I saw how she had grown to look like Mis' Todd. 'T was the mother right over again."

"Oh dear me!" said Mrs. Fosdick.

"Joanna had done one thing very pretty. There was a little piece o' swamp on the island where good rushes grew plenty, and she'd gathered 'em, and braided some beautiful mats for the floor and a thick cushion for the long bunk. She'd showed a good deal of invention; you see there was a nice chance to pick up pieces o'

wood and boards that drove ashore, and she'd made good use o' what she found. There wasn't no clock, but she had a few dishes on a shelf, and flowers set about in shells fixed to the walls, so it did look sort of homelike, though so lonely and poor. I couldn't keep the tears out o' my eyes, I felt so sad. I said to myself, I must get mother to come over an' see Joanna; the love in mother's heart would warm her, an' she might be able to advise."

"Oh no, Joanna was dreadful stern," said Mrs. Fosdick.

"We were all settin' down very proper, but Joanna would keep stealin' glances at me as if she was glad I come. She had but little to say; she was real polite an' gentle, and yet forbiddin'. The minister found it hard," confessed Mrs. Todd; "he got embarrassed, an' when he put on his authority and asked her if she felt to enjoy religion in her present situation, an' she replied that she must be excused from answerin', I thought I should fly. She might have made it easier for him; after all, he was the minister and had taken some trouble to come out, though 't was kind of cold an' unfeelin' the way he inquired. I thought he might have seen the little old Bible a-layin' on the shelf close by him, an' I wished he knew enough to just lay his hand on it an' read somethin' kind an' fatherly 'stead of accusin' her, an' then given poor Joanna his blessin' with the hope she might be led to comfort. He did offer prayer, but 't was all about hearin' the voice o' God out o' the whirlwind;[1] and I thought while he was goin' on that anybody that had spent the long cold winter all alone out on Shell-heap Island knew a good deal more about those things than he did. I got so provoked I opened my eyes and stared right at him.

"She didn't take no notice, she kep' a nice respectful manner towards him, and when there come a pause she asked if he had any interest about the old Indian remains, and took down some queer stone gouges and hammers off of one of her shelves and showed them to him same 's if he was a boy. He remarked that he'd like to walk over an' see the shell-heap; so she went right to the door and pointed him the way. I see then that she'd made her some kind o' sandal-shoes out o' the fine rushes to wear on her feet; she stepped light an' nice in 'em as shoes."

Mrs. Fosdick leaned back in her rocking-chair and gave a heavy sigh.

"I didn't move at first, but I'd held out just as long as I could," said Mrs. Todd, whose voice trembled a little. "When Joanna returned from the door, an' I could see that man's stupid back

1 Job 38:1: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind."

departin' among the wild rose bushes, I just ran to her an' caught her in my arms. I wasn't so big as I be now, and she was older than me, but I hugged her tight, just as if she was a child. 'Oh, Joanna dear,' I says, 'won't you come ashore an' live 'long o' me at the Landin', or go over to Green Island to mother's when winter comes? Nobody shall trouble you, an' mother finds it hard bein' alone. I can't bear to leave you here'—and I burst right out crying. I'd had my own trials, young as I was, an' she knew it. Oh, I did entreat her; yes, I entreated Joanna."

"What did she say then?" asked Mrs. Fosdick, much moved.

"She looked the same way, sad an' remote through it all," said Mrs. Todd mournfully. "She took hold of my hand, and we sat down close together; 't was as if she turned round an' made a child of me. 'I haven't got no right to live with folks no more,' she said. 'You must never ask me again, Almiry: I've done the only thing I could do, and I've made my choice. I feel a great comfort in your kindness, but I don't deserve it. I have committed the unpardonable sin;[1] you don't understand,' says she humbly. 'I was in great wrath and trouble, and my thoughts was so wicked towards God that I can't expect ever to be forgiven. I have come to know what it is to have patience, but I have lost my hope. You must tell those that ask how 't is with me,' she said, 'an' tell them I want to be alone.' I couldn't speak; no, there wa'n't anything I could say, she seemed so above everything common. I was a good deal younger then than I be now, and I got Nathan's little coral pin out o' my pocket and put it into her hand; and when she saw it and I told her where it come from, her face did really light up for a minute, sort of bright an' pleasant. 'Nathan an' I was always good friends; I'm glad he don't think hard of me,' says she. 'I want you to have it, Almiry, an' wear it for love o' both o' us,' and she handed it back to me. 'You give my love to Nathan,—he's a dear good man,' she said; 'an' tell your mother, if I should be sick she mustn't wish I could get well, but I want her to be the one to come.' Then she seemed to have said all she wanted to, as if she was done with the world, and we sat there a few minutes longer together. It was real sweet and quiet except for a good many birds and the sea rollin' up on the beach; but at last she rose, an' I did too, and she kissed me and held my hand in hers a minute, as if to

1 Though this phrase does not appear in the Bible, Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:29, and Luke 12:10 suggest that it is a willful act of non-belief in the divinity of Jesus or of the Holy Spirit.

say good-by; then she turned and went right away out o' the door and disappeared.

"The minister come back pretty soon, and I told him I was all ready, and we started down to the bo't. He had picked up some round stones and things and was carrying them in his pocket-handkerchief; an' he sat down amidships without making any question, and let me take the rudder an' work the bo't, an' made no remarks for some time, until we sort of eased it off speaking of the weather, an' subjects that arose as we skirted Black Island, where two or three families lived belongin' to the parish. He preached next Sabbath as usual, somethin' high soundin' about the creation, and I couldn't help thinkin' he might never get no further; he seemed to know no remedies, but he had a great use of words."

Mrs. Fosdick sighed again. "Hearin' you tell about Joanna brings the time right back as if 't was yesterday," she said. "Yes, she was one o' them poor things that talked about the great sin; we don't seem to hear nothing about the unpardonable sin now, but you may say 't was not uncommon then."

"I expect that if it had been in these days, such a person would be plagued to death with idle folks," continued Mrs. Todd, after a long pause. "As it was, nobody trespassed on her; all the folks about the bay respected her an' her feelings; but as time wore on, after you left here, one after another ventured to make occasion to put somethin' ashore for her if they went that way. I know mother used to go to see her sometimes, and send William over now and then with something fresh an' nice from the farm. There is a point on the sheltered side where you can lay a boat close to shore an' land anything safe on the turf out o' reach o' the water. There were one or two others, old folks, that she would see, and now an' then she 'd hail a passin' boat an' ask for somethin'; and mother got her to promise that she would make some sign to the Black Island folks if she wanted help. I never saw her myself to speak to after that day."

"I expect nowadays, if such a thing happened, she'd have gone out West to her uncle's folks or up to Massachusetts and had a change, an' come home good as new. The world's bigger an' freer than it used to be," urged Mrs. Fosdick.

"No," said her friend. "'T is like bad eyesight, the mind of such a person: if your eyes don't see right there may be a remedy, but there's no kind of glasses to remedy the mind. No, Joanna was Joanna, and there she lays on her island where she lived and did her poor penance. She told mother the day she was dyin' that

she always used to want to be fetched inshore when it come to the last; but she'd thought it over, and desired to be laid on the island, if 't was thought right. So the funeral was out there, a Saturday afternoon in September. 'T was a pretty day, and there wa'n't hardly a boat on the coast within twenty miles that didn't head for Shell-heap cram-full o' folks, an' all real respectful, same 's if she'd always stayed ashore and held her friends. Some went out o' mere curiosity, I don't doubt,—there's always such to every funeral; but most had real feelin', and went purpose to show it. She'd got most o' the wild sparrows as tame as could be, livin' out there so long among 'em, and one flew right in and lit on the coffin an' begun to sing while Mr. Dimmick was speakin'. He was put out by it, an' acted as if he didn't know whether to stop or go on. I may have been prejudiced, but I wa'n't the only one thought the poor little bird done the best of the two."

"What became o' the man that treated her so, did you ever hear?" asked Mrs. Fosdick. "I know he lived up to Massachusetts for a while. Somebody who came from the same place told me that he was in trade there an' doin' very well, but that was years ago."

"I never heard anything more than that; he went to the war in one o' the early rigiments. No, I never heard any more of him," answered Mrs. Todd. "Joanna was another sort of person, and perhaps he showed good judgment in marryin' somebody else, if only he'd behaved straightforward and manly. He was a shifty-eyed, coaxin' sort of man, that got what he wanted out o' folks, an' only gave when he wanted to buy, made friends easy and lost 'em without knowin' the difference. She'd had a piece o' work tryin' to make him walk accordin' to her right ideas, but she'd have had too much variety ever to fall into a melancholy. Some is meant to be the Joannas in this world, an' 't was her poor lot."

XV. On Shell-heap Island

Some time after Mrs. Fosdick's visit was over and we had returned to our former quietness, I was out sailing alone with Captain Bowden in his large boat. We were taking the crooked northeasterly channel seaward, and were well out from shore while it was still early in the afternoon. I found myself presently among some unfamiliar islands, and suddenly remembered the story of poor Joanna. There is something in the fact of a hermitage that cannot

fail to touch the imagination; the recluses are a sad kindred, but they are never commonplace. Mrs. Todd had truly said that Joanna was like one of the saints in the desert;[1] the loneliness of sorrow will forever keep alive their sad succession.

"Where is Shell-heap Island?" I asked eagerly.

"You see Shell-heap now, layin' 'way out beyond Black Island there," answered the captain, pointing with outstretched arm as he stood, and holding the rudder with his knee.

"I should like very much to go there," said I, and the captain, without comment, changed his course a little more to the eastward and let the reef out of his mainsail.

"I don't know 's we can make an easy landin' for ye," he remarked doubtfully. "May get your feet wet; bad place to land. Trouble is I ought to have brought a tag-boat;[2] but they clutch on to the water so, an' I do love to sail free. This gre't boat gets easy bothered with anything trailin'. 'T ain't breakin' much on the meetin'-house ledges; guess I can fetch in to Shell-heap."

"How long is it since Miss Joanna Todd died?" I asked, partly by way of explanation.

"Twenty-two years come September," answered the captain, after reflection. "She died the same year as my oldest boy was born, an' the town house was burnt over to the Port. I didn't know but you merely wanted to hunt for some o' them Indian relics. Long 's you want to see where Joanna lived—No, 't ain't breakin' over the ledges; we'll manage to fetch across the shoals somehow, 't is such a distance to go 'way round, and tide's a-risin'," he ended hopefully, and we sailed steadily on, the captain speechless with intent watching of a difficult course, until the small island with its low whitish promontory lay in full view before us under the bright afternoon sun.

The month was August, and I had seen the color of the islands change from the fresh green of June to a sunburnt brown that made them look like stone, except where the dark green of the spruces and fir balsam kept the tint that even winter storms might deepen, but not fade. The few wind-bent trees on Shell-heap Island were mostly dead and gray, but there were some low-

1 Also known as the Desert Fathers, these were a group of Christian hermits, ascetics, and monks who took up habitation in the Egyptian desert in the third century. The most famous of these hermits is Saint Anthony (251-356); other Desert Fathers include Saint Pachomius (292-348) and Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite (348-466).

2 A small rowboat.

growing bushes, and a stripe of light green ran along just above the shore, which I knew to be wild morning-glories. As we came close I could see the high stone walls of a small square field, though there were no sheep left to assail it; and below, there was a little harbor-like cove where Captain Bowden was boldly running the great boat in to seek a landing-place. There was a crooked channel of deep water which led close up against the shore.

"There, you hold fast for'ard there, an' wait for her to lift on the wave. You'll make a good landin' if you're smart; right on the port-hand side!" the captain called excitedly; and I, standing ready with high ambition, seized my chance and leaped over to the grassy bank.

"I'm beat if I ain't aground after all!" mourned the captain despondently.

But I could reach the bowsprit,[1] and he pushed with the boat-hook, while the wind veered round a little as if on purpose and helped with the sail; so presently the boat was free and began to drift out from shore.

"Used to call this p'int Joanna's wharf privilege, but 't has worn away in the weather since her time. I thought one or two bumps wouldn't hurt us none,—paint's got to be renewed, anyway,—but I never thought she'd tetch. I figured on shyin' by," the captain apologized. "She's too gre't a boat to handle well in here; but I used to sort of shy by in Joanna's day, an' cast a little somethin' ashore—some apples or a couple o' pears if I had 'em—on the grass, where she'd be sure to see."

I stood watching while Captain Bowden cleverly found his way back to deeper water. "You needn't make no haste," he called to me; "I'll keep within call. Joanna lays right up there in the far corner o' the field. There used to be a path led to the place. I always knew her well. I was out here to the funeral."

I found the path; it was touching to discover that this lonely spot was not without its pilgrims. Later generations will know less and less of Joanna herself, but there are paths trodden to the shrines of solitude the world over,—the world cannot forget them, try as it may; the feet of the young find them out because of curiosity and dim foreboding; while the old bring hearts full of remembrance. This plain anchorite[2] had been one of those whom sorrow made too lonely to brave the sight of men, too timid to

1 A spar (or rounded pole of wood) projecting from the bow of a vessel.

2 One who retires from society for religious reasons.

front the simple world she knew, yet valiant enough to live alone with her poor insistent human nature and the calms and passions of the sea and sky.

The birds were flying all about the field; they fluttered up out of the grass at my feet as I walked along, so tame that I liked to think they kept some happy tradition from summer to summer of the safety of nests and good fellowship of mankind. Poor Joanna's house was gone except the stones of its foundations, and there was little trace of her flower garden except a single faded sprig of much-enduring French pinks,[1] which a great bee and a yellow butterfly were befriending together. I drank at the spring, and thought that now and then some one would follow me from the busy, hard-worked, and simple-thoughted countryside of the mainland, which lay dim and dreamlike in the August haze, as Joanna must have watched it many a day. There was the world, and here was she with eternity well begun. In the life of each of us, I said to myself, there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong.

But as I stood alone on the island, in the sea-breeze, suddenly there came a sound of distant voices; gay voices and laughter from a pleasure-boat that was going seaward full of boys and girls. I knew, as if she had told me, that poor Joanna must have heard the like on many and many a summer afternoon, and must have welcomed the good cheer in spite of hopelessness and winter weather, and all the sorrow and disappointment in the world.

XVI. The Great Expedition

Mrs. Todd never by any chance gave warning over night of her great projects and adventures by sea and land. She first came to an understanding with the primal forces of nature, and never trusted to any preliminary promise of good weather, but examined the day for herself in its infancy. Then, if the stars were propitious,[2] and the wind blew from a quarter of good inheritance

1 *Dianthus barbatus* or Sweet William, a short-lived perennial with small pink or red flowers.

2 Favorable.

whence no surprises of sea-turns or southwest sultriness might be feared, long before I was fairly awake I used to hear a rustle and knocking like a great mouse in the walls, and an impatient tread on the steep garret stairs that led to Mrs. Todd's chief place of storage. She went and came as if she had already started on her expedition with utmost haste and kept returning for something that was forgotten. When I appeared in quest of my breakfast, she would be absent-minded and sparing of speech, as if I had displeased her, and she was now, by main force of principle, holding herself back from altercation and strife of tongues.[1]

These signs of a change became familiar to me in the course of time, and Mrs. Todd hardly noticed some plain proofs of divination one August morning when I said, without preface, that I had just seen the Beggs' best chaise[2] go by, and that we should have to take the grocery. Mrs. Todd was alert in a moment.

"There! I might have known!" she exclaimed. "I 's the 15th of August, when he goes and gets his money. He heired[3] an annuity from an uncle o' his on his mother's side. I understood the uncle said none o' Sam Begg's wife's folks should make free with it, so after Sam's gone it'll all be past an' spent, like last summer. That's what Sam prospers on now, if you can call it prosperin'. Yes, I might have known. 'T is the 15th o' August with him, an' he gener'ly stops to dinner with a cousin's widow on the way home. Feb'uary an' August is the times. Takes him 'bout all day to go an' come."

I heard this explanation with interest. The tone of Mrs. Todd's voice was complaining at the last.

"I like the grocery just as well as the chaise," I hastened to say, referring to a long-bodied high wagon with a canopy-top, like an attenuated four-posted bedstead on wheels, in which we sometimes journeyed. "We can put things in behind—roots and flowers and raspberries, or anything you are going after—much better than if we had the chaise."

Mrs. Todd looked stony and unwilling. "I counted upon the chaise," she said, turning her back to me, and roughly pushing back all the quiet tumblers on the cupboard shelf as if they had been impertinent. "Yes, I desired the chaise for once. I ain't goin' berryin' nor to fetch home no more wilted vegetation this year.

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1 Psalms 31:20: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

2 A light, two- or four-wheeled traveling carriage with a moveable top.

3 Inherited.

Season's about past, except for a poor few o' late things," she added in a milder tone. "I'm goin' up country. No, I ain't intendin' to go berryin'. I've been plottin' for it the past fortnight and hopin' for a good day."

"Would you like to have me go too?" I asked frankly, but not without a humble fear that I might have mistaken the purpose of this latest plan.

"Oh certain, dear!" answered my friend affectionately. "Oh no, I never thought o' any one else for comp'ny, if it's convenient for you, long 's poor mother ain't come. I ain't nothin' like so handy with a conveyance as I be with a good bo't. Comes o' my early bringing-up. I expect we've got to make that great high wagon do. The tires want settin'[1] and 't is all loose-jointed, so I can hear it shackle the other side o' the ridge. We'll put the basket in front. I ain't goin' to have it bouncin' an' twirlin' all the way. Why, I've been makin' some nice hearts and rounds[2] to carry."

These were signs of high festivity, and my interest deepened moment by moment.

"I'll go down to the Beggs' and get the horse just as soon as I finish my breakfast," said I. "Then we can start whenever you are ready."

Mrs. Todd looked cloudy again. "I don't know but you look nice enough to go just as you be," she suggested doubtfully. "No, you wouldn't want to wear that pretty blue dress o' yourn 'way up country. 'T aint dusty now, but it may be comin' home. No, I expect you'd rather not wear that and the other hat."

"Oh yes. I shouldn't think of wearing these clothes," said I, with sudden illumination. "Why, if we're going up country and are likely to see some of your friends, I'll put on my blue dress, and you must wear your watch; I am not going at all if you mean to wear the big hat."

"Now you're behavin' pretty," responded Mrs. Todd, with a gay toss of her head and a cheerful smile, as she came across the room, bringing a saucerful of wild raspberries, a pretty piece of salvage from supper-time. "I was cast down when I see you come to breakfast. I didn't think 't was just what you'd select to wear to the reunion, where you're goin' to meet everybody."

"What reunion do you mean?" I asked, not without amazement. "Not the Bowden Family's? I thought that was going to take place in September."

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1 Resetting iron or steel wagon wheels that have grown loose with use.

2 Small cakes produced from tin cake-molds in these two shapes.

"To-day's the day. They sent word the middle o' the week. I thought you might have heard of it. Yes, they changed the day. I been thinkin' we'd talk it over, but you never can tell beforehand how it's goin' to be, and 't ain't worth while to wear a day all out before it comes." Mrs. Todd gave no place to the pleasures of anticipation, but she spoke like the oracle that she was. "I wish mother was here to go," she continued sadly. "I did look for her last night, and I couldn't keep back the tears when the dark really fell and she wa'n't here, she does so enjoy a great occasion. If William had a mite o' snap an' ambition, he'd take the lead at such a time. Mother likes variety, and there ain't but a few nice opportunities 'round here, an' them she has to miss 'less she contrives to get ashore to me. I do re'lly hate to go to the reunion without mother, an' 't is a beautiful day; everybody'll be asking where she is. Once she'd have got here anyway. Poor mother's beginnin' to feel her age."

"Why, there's your mother now!" I exclaimed with joy, I was so glad to see the dear old soul again. "I hear her voice at the gate." But Mrs. Todd was out of the door before me.

There, sure enough, stood Mrs. Blackett, who must have left Green Island before daylight. She had climbed the steep road from the water-side so eagerly that she was out of breath, and was standing by the garden fence to rest. She held an old-fashioned brown wicker cap-basket[1] in her hand, as if visiting were a thing of every day, and looked up at us as pleased and triumphant as a child.

"Oh, what a poor, plain garden! Hardly a flower in it except your bush o' balm!"[2] she said. "But you do keep your garden neat, Almiry. Are you both well, an' goin' up country with me?" She came a step or two closer to meet us, with quaint politeness and quite as delightful as if she were at home. She dropped a quick little curtsey before Mrs. Todd.

"There, mother, what a girl you be! I am so pleased! I was just bewailin' you," said the daughter, with unwonted feeling. "I was just bewailin' you, I was so disappointed, an' I kep' myself awake a good piece o' the night scoldin' poor William. I watched for the boat till I was ready to shed tears yisterday, and when 't was comin' dark I kep' making errands out to the gate an' down the

1 A covered basket used to hold clothing.

2 Sweet balm or lemon balm, a small, perennial shrub whose leaves are used to treat cough, fever, and influenza. The word balm is an abbreviation of balsam, chief of the sweet-smelling oils.

road to see if you wa'n't in the doldrums somewhere down the bay."

"There was a head wind, as you know," said Mrs. Blackett, giving me the cap-basket, and holding my hand affectionately as we walked up the clean-swept path to the door. "I was partly ready to come, but dear William said I should be all tired out and might get cold, havin' to beat all the way in. So we give it up, and set down and spent the evenin' together. It was a little rough and windy outside, and I guess 't was better judgment; we went to bed very early and made a good start just at daylight. It's been a lovely mornin' on the water. William thought he'd better fetch across beyond Bird Rocks, rowin' the greater part o' the way; then we sailed from there right over to the Landin', makin' only one tack.[1] William'll be in again for me to-morrow, so I can come back here an' rest me over night, an' go to meetin' to-morrow, and have a nice, good visit."

"She was just havin' her breakfast," said Mrs. Todd, who had listened eagerly to the long explanation without a word of disapproval, while her face shone more and more with joy. "You just sit right down an' have a cup of tea and rest you while we make our preparations. Oh, I am so gratified to think you've come! Yes, she was just havin' her breakfast, and we were speakin' of you. Where's William?"

"He went right back; he said he expected some schooners in about noon after bait, but he'll come an' have his dinner with us to-morrow, unless it rains; then next day. I laid his best things out all ready," explained Mrs. Blackett, a little anxiously. "This wind will serve him nice all the way home. Yes, I will take a cup of tea, dear,—a cup of tea is always good; and then I'll rest a minute and be all ready to start."

"I do feel condemned for havin' such hard thoughts o' William," openly confessed Mrs. Todd. She stood before us so large and serious that we both laughed and could not find it in our hearts to convict so rueful a culprit. "He shall have a good dinner to-morrow, if it can be got, and I shall be real glad to see William," the confession ended handsomely, while Mrs. Blackett smiled approval and made haste to praise the tea. Then I hurried away to make sure of the grocery wagon. Whatever might be the good of the reunion, I was going to have the pleasure and delight of a day in Mrs. Blackett's company, not to speak of Mrs. Todd's.

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1 A sailing maneuver in which a boat turns its bow through the wind.

The early morning breeze was still blowing, and the warm, sunshiny air was of some ethereal northern sort, with a cool freshness as if it came over new-fallen snow. The world was filled with a fragrance of fir-balsam and the faintest flavor of seaweed from the ledges, bare and brown at low tide in the little harbor. It was so still and so early that the village was but half awake. I could hear no voices but those of the birds, small and great,—the constant song sparrows, the clink of a yellow-hammer[1] over in the woods, and the far conversation of some deliberate crows. I saw William Blackett's escaping sail already far from land, and Captain Littlepage was sitting behind his closed window as I passed by, watching for some one who never came. I tried to speak to him, but he did not see me. There was a patient look on the old man's face, as if the world were a great mistake and he had nobody with whom to speak his own language or find companionship.

XVII. A Country Road

Whatever doubts and anxieties I may have had about the inconvenience of the Beggs' high wagon for a person of Mrs. Blackett's age and shortness, they were happily overcome by the aid of a chair and her own valiant spirit. Mrs. Todd bestowed great care upon seating us as if we were taking passage by boat, but she finally pronounced that we were properly trimmed. When we had gone only a little way up the hill she remembered that she had left the house door wide open, though the large key was safe in her pocket. I offered to run back, but my offer was met with lofty scorn, and we lightly dismissed the matter from our minds, until two or three miles further on we met the doctor, and Mrs. Todd asked him to stop and ask her nearest neighbor to step over and close the door if the dust seemed to blow in the afternoon.

"She'll be there in her kitchen; she'll hear you the minute you call; 't wont give you no delay," said Mrs. Todd to the doctor. "Yes, Mis' Dennet's right there, with the windows all open. It isn't as if my fore door opened right on the road, anyway." At which proof of composure Mrs. Blackett smiled wisely at me.

The doctor seemed delighted to see our guest; they were evidently the warmest friends, and I saw a look of affectionate con-

1 The Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker, a medium-sized member of the woodpecker family.

fidence in their eyes. The good man left his carriage to speak to us, but as he took Mrs. Blackett's hand he held it a moment, and, as if merely from force of habit, felt her pulse as they talked; then to my delight he gave the firm old wrist a commending pat.

"You're wearing well: good for another ten years at this rate," he assured her cheerfully, and she smiled back. "I like to keep a strict account of my old stand-bys," and he turned to me. "Don't you let Mrs. Todd overdo to-day,—old folks like her are apt to be thoughtless;" and then we all laughed, and, parting, went our ways gayly.

"I suppose he puts up with your rivalry the same as ever?" asked Mrs. Blackett. "You and he are as friendly as ever, I see, Almiry," and Almira sagely nodded.

"He's got too many long routes now to stop to 'tend to all his door patients," she said, "especially them that takes pleasure in talkin' themselves over. The doctor and me have got to be kind of partners; he's gone a good deal, far an' wide. Looked tired, didn't he? I shall have to advise with him an' get him off for a good rest. He'll take the big boat from Rockland[1] an' go off up to Boston an' mouse round among the other doctors, once in two or three years, and come home fresh as a boy. I guess they think consider'ble of him up there." Mrs. Todd shook the reins and reached determinedly for the whip, as if she were compelling public opinion.

Whatever energy and spirit the white horse had to begin with were soon exhausted by the steep hills and his discernment of a long expedition ahead. We toiled slowly along. Mrs. Blackett and I sat together, and Mrs. Todd sat alone in front with much majesty and the large basket of provisions. Part of the way the road was shaded by thick woods, but we also passed one farmhouse after another on the high uplands, which we all three regarded with deep interest, the house itself and the barns and garden-spots and poultry all having to suffer an inspection of the shrewdest sort. This was a highway quite new to me; in fact, most of my journeys with Mrs. Todd had been made afoot and between the roads, in open pasturelands. My friends stopped several times for brief dooryard visits, and made so many promises of stopping again on the way home that I began to wonder how long the expedition would last. I had often noticed how warmly Mrs. Todd was greeted by her friends, but it was hardly to be compared to the feeling now shown toward Mrs. Blackett. A look of delight came

1 A city located in mid-coastal Maine.

to the faces of those who recognized the plain, dear old figure beside me; one revelation after another was made of the constant interest and intercourse that had linked the far island and these scattered farms into a golden chain of love and dependence.

"Now, we must n't stop again if we can help it," insisted Mrs. Todd at last. "You'll get tired, mother, and you'll think the less o' reunions. We can visit along here any day. There, if they ain't frying doughnuts in this next house, too! These are new folks, you know, from over St. George way; they took this old Talcot farm last year. 'T is the best water on the road, and the check-rein's[1] come undone—yes, we'd best delay a little and water the horse."

We stopped, and seeing a party of pleasure-seekers in holiday attire, the thin, anxious mistress of the farmhouse came out with wistful sympathy to hear what news we might have to give. Mrs. Blackett first spied her at the half-closed door, and asked with such cheerful directness if we were trespassing that, after a few words, she went back to her kitchen and reappeared with a plateful of doughnuts.

"Entertainment for man and beast,"[2] announced Mrs. Todd with satisfaction. "Why, we've perceived there was new doughnuts all along the road, but you're the first that has treated us."

Our new acquaintance flushed with pleasure, but said nothing.

"They're very nice; you've had good luck with 'em," pronounced Mrs. Todd. "Yes, we've observed there was doughnuts all the way along; if one house is frying all the rest is; 't is so with a great many things."

"I don't suppose likely you're goin' up to the Bowden reunion?" asked the hostess as the white horse lifted his head and we were saying good-by.

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd and I, all together.

"I am connected with the family. Yes, I expect to be there this afternoon. I've been lookin' forward to it," she told us eagerly.

"We shall see you there. Come and sit with us if it's convenient," said dear Mrs. Blackett, and we drove away.

"I wonder who she was before she was married?" said Mrs. Todd, who was usually unerring in matters of genealogy. "She

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1 A short rein that extends from a horse's bit to the saddle to keep the horse from lowering its head.

2 A phrase associated with, and often found on the swinging signs outside of, hotels and inns. It signified that both people and their horses could find food and accommodation.

must have been one of that remote branch that lived down beyond Thomaston. We can find out this afternoon. I expect that the families'll march together, or be sorted out some way. I'm willing to own a relation that has such proper ideas of doughnuts."

"I seem to see the family looks," said Mrs. Blackett. "I wish we'd asked her name. She's a stranger, and I want to help make it pleasant for all such."

"She resembles Cousin Pa'lina Bowden about the forehead," said Mrs. Todd with decision.

We had just passed a piece of woodland that shaded the road, and come out to some open fields beyond, when Mrs. Todd suddenly reined in the horse as if somebody had stood on the roadside and stopped her. She even gave that quick reassuring nod of her head which was usually made to answer for a bow, but I discovered that she was looking eagerly at a tall ash-tree that grew just inside the field fence.

"I thought 't was goin' to do well," she said complacently as we went on again. "Last time I was up this way that tree was kind of drooping and discouraged. Grown trees act that way sometimes, same 's folks; then they'll put right to it and strike their roots off into new ground and start all over again with real good courage. Ash-trees is very likely to have poor spells; they ain't got the resolution of other trees."

I listened hopefully for more; it was this peculiar wisdom that made one value Mrs. Todd's pleasant company.

"There's sometimes a good hearty tree growin' right out of the bare rock, out o' some crack that just holds the roots;" she went on to say, "right on the pitch o' one o' them bare stony hills where you can't seem to see a wheel-barrowful o' good earth in a place, but that tree'll keep a green top in the driest summer. You lay your ear down to the ground an' you'll hear a little stream runnin'. Every such tree has got its own livin' spring; there's folks made to match 'em."

I could not help turning to look at Mrs. Blackett, close beside me. Her hands were clasped placidly in their thin black woolen gloves, and she was looking at the flowery wayside as we went slowly along, with a pleased, expectant smile. I do not think she had heard a word about the trees.

"I just saw a nice plant o' elecampane[1] growin' back there," she said presently to her daughter.

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1 See note 1, p. 47.

"I haven't got my mind on herbs to-day," responded Mrs. Todd, in the most matter-of-fact way. "I'm bent on seeing folks," and she shook the reins again.

I for one had no wish to hurry, it was so pleasant in the shady roads. The woods stood close to the road on the right; on the left were narrow fields and pastures where there were as many acres of spruces and pines as there were acres of bay and juniper and huckleberry, with a little turf between. When I thought we were in the heart of the inland country, we reached the top of a hill, and suddenly there lay spread out before us a wonderful great view of well-cleared fields that swept down to the wide water of a bay. Beyond this were distant shores like another country in the midday haze which half hid the hills beyond, and the far-away pale blue mountains on the northern horizon. There was a schooner with all sails set coming down the bay from a white village that was sprinkled on the shore, and there were many sail-boats flitting about. It was a noble landscape, and my eyes, which had grown used to the narrow inspection of a shaded roadside, could hardly take it in.

"Why, it's the upper bay," said Mrs. Todd. "You can see 'way over into the town of Fessenden.[1] Those farms 'way over there are all in Fessenden. Mother used to have a sister that lived up that shore. If we started as early' 's we could on a summer mornin', we couldn't get to her place from Green Island till late afternoon, even with a fair, steady breeze, and you had to strike the time just right so as to fetch up 'long o' the tide and land near the flood.[2] 'T was ticklish business, an' we didn't visit back an' forth as much as mother desired. You have to go 'way down the co'st to Cold Spring Light an' round that long point,—up here's what they call the Back Shore."

"No, we were 'most always separated, my dear sister and me, after the first year she was married," said Mrs. Blackett. "We had our little families an' plenty o' cares. We were always lookin' forward to the time we could see each other more. Now and then she'd get out to the island for a few days while her husband 'd go fishin'; and once he stopped with her an' two children, and made him some flakes[3] right there and cured all his fish for winter. We did have a beautiful time together, sister an' me; she used to look back to it long 's she lived."

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1 Like Dunnet Landing, a fictional town in Maine.

2 To come in with the tide and land with high water.

3 Platforms for drying fish.

"I do love to look over there where she used to live," Mrs. Blackett went on as we began to go down the hill. "It seems as if she must still be there, though she's long been gone. She loved their farm,—she didn't see how I got so used to our island; but somehow I was always happy from the first."

"Yes, it's very dull to me up among those slow farms," declared Mrs. Todd. "The snow troubles 'em in winter. They're all besieged by winter, as you may say; 't is far better by the shore than up among such places. I never thought I should like to live up country."

"Why, just see the carriages ahead of us on the next rise!" exclaimed Mrs. Blackett. "There's going to be a great gathering, don't you believe there is, Almiry? It hasn't seemed up to now as if anybody was going but us. An' 't is such a beautiful day, with yesterday cool and pleasant to work an' get ready, I shouldn't wonder if everybody was there, even the slow ones like Phebe Ann Brock."

Mrs. Blackett's eyes were bright with excitement, and even Mrs. Todd showed remarkable enthusiasm. She hurried the horse and caught up with the holiday-makers ahead. "There's all the Dep'fords goin', six in the wagon," she told us joyfully; "an' Mis' Alva Tilley's folks are now risin' the hill in their new carryall."

Mrs. Blackett pulled at the neat bow of her black bonnet-strings, and tied them again with careful precision. "I believe your bonnet's on a little bit sideways, dear," she advised Mrs. Todd as if she were a child; but Mrs. Todd was too much occupied to pay proper heed. We began to feel a new sense of gayety and of taking part in the great occasion as we joined the little train.

XVIII. The Bowden Reunion

It is very rare in country life, where high days and holidays are few, that any occasion of general interest proves to be less than great. Such is the hidden fire of enthusiasm in the New England nature that, once given an outlet, it shines forth with almost volcanic light and heat. In quiet neighborhoods such inward force does not waste itself upon those petty excitements of every day that belong to cities, but when, at long intervals, the altars to patriotism, to friendship, to the ties of kindred, are reared in our familiar fields, then the fires glow, the flames come up as if from the inexhaustible burning heart of the earth; the primal fires break through the granite dust in which our souls are set. Each

heart is warm and every face shines with the ancient light. Such a day as this has transfiguring powers, and easily makes friends of those who have been cold-hearted, and gives to those who are dumb their chance to speak, and lends some beauty to the plainest face.

"Oh, I expect I shall meet friends to-day that I haven't seen in a long while," said Mrs. Blackett with deep satisfaction. "'T will bring out a good many of the old folks, 't is such a lovely day. I'm always glad not to have them disappointed."

"I guess likely the best of 'em'll be there," answered Mrs. Todd with gentle humor, stealing a glance at me. "There's one thing certain: there's nothing takes in this whole neighborhood like anything related to the Bowdens. Yes, I do feel that when you call upon the Bowdens you may expect most families to rise up between the Landing and the far end of the Back Cove. Those that aren't kin by blood are kin by marriage."

"There used to be an old story goin' about when I was a girl," said Mrs. Blackett, with much amusement. "There was a great many more Bowdens then than there are now, and the folks was all setting in meeting a dreadful hot Sunday afternoon, and a scatter-witted little bound girl[1] came running to the meetin'-house door all out o' breath from somewheres in the neighborhood. 'Mis' Bowden, Mis' Bowden!' says she. 'Your baby's in a fit!' They used to tell that the whole congregation was up on its feet in a minute and right out into the aisles. All the Mis' Bowdens was setting right out for home; the minister stood there in the pulpit tryin' to keep sober, an' all at once he burst right out laughin'. He was a very nice man, they said, and he said he'd better give 'em the benediction, and they could hear the sermon next Sunday, so he kept it over. My mother was there, and she thought certain 't was me."

"None of our family was ever subject to fits," interrupted Mrs. Todd severely. "No, we never had fits, none of us, and 't was lucky we didn't 'way out there to Green Island. Now these folks right in front: dear sakes knows the bunches o' soothing catnip an' yarrow[2] I've had to favor old Mis' Evins with dryin'! You can see it right in their expressions, all them Evins folks. There, just you

1 An indentured servant, i.e., one who is contracted with an employer for between four to seven years in exchange for passage from another country, food, land, or living accommodations.

2 For catnip, see note 3, p. 92. Yarrow tea is a cold remedy and is also used for measles and kidney problems.

look up to the crossroads, mother," she suddenly exclaimed. "See all the teams ahead of us. And oh, look down on the bay; yes, look down on the bay! See what a sight o' boats, all headin' for the Bowden place cove!"

"Oh, ain't it beautiful!" said Mrs. Blackett, with all the delight of a girl. She stood up in the high wagon to see everything, and when she sat down again she took fast hold of my hand.

"Hadn't you better urge the horse a little, Almiry?" she asked. "He's had it easy as we came along, and he can rest when we get there. The others are some little ways ahead, and I don't want to lose a minute."

We watched the boats drop their sails one by one in the cove as we drove along the high land. The old Bowden house stood, low-storied and broad-roofed, in its green fields as if it were a motherly brown hen waiting for the flock that came straying toward it from every direction. The first Bowden settler had made his home there, and it was still the Bowden farm; five generations of sailors and farmers and soldiers had been its children. And presently Mrs. Blackett showed me the stone-walled burying-ground that stood like a little fort on a knoll overlooking the bay, but, as she said, there were plenty of scattered Bowdens who were not laid there,—some lost at sea, and some out West, and some who died in the war; most of the home graves were those of women.

We could see now that there were different footpaths from along shore and across country. In all these there were straggling processions walking in single file, like old illustrations of the Pilgrim's Progress.[1] There was a crowd about the house as if huge bees were swarming in the lilac bushes. Beyond the fields and cove a higher point of land ran out into the bay, covered with woods which must have kept away much of the northwest wind in winter. Now there was a pleasant look of shade and shelter there for the great family meeting.

We hurried on our way, beginning to feel as if we were very late, and it was a great satisfaction at last to turn out of the stony highroad into a green lane shaded with old apple-trees. Mrs. Todd encouraged the horse until he fairly pranced with gayety as we drove round to the front of the house on the soft turf. There was an instant cry of rejoicing, and two or three persons ran toward us from the busy group.

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1 John Bunyan's (1628-88) *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678, 1684), published in two parts, is a Christian allegory of a life's journey.

"Why, dear Mis' Blackett!—here's Mis' Blackett!" I heard them say, as if it were pleasure enough for one day to have a sight of her. Mrs. Todd turned to me with a lovely look of triumph and self-forgetfulness. An elderly man who wore the look of a prosperous sea-captain put up both arms and lifted Mrs. Blackett down from the high wagon like a child, and kissed her with hearty affection. "I was master afraid she wouldn't be here," he said, looking at Mrs. Todd with a face like a happy sunburnt schoolboy, while everybody crowded round to give their welcome.

"Mother's always the queen," said Mrs. Todd. "Yes, they'll all make everything of mother; she'll have a lovely time to-day. I wouldn't have had her miss it, and there won't be a thing she'll ever regret, except to mourn because William wa'n't here."

Mrs. Blackett having been properly escorted to the house, Mrs. Todd received her own full share of honor, and some of the men, with a simple kindness that was the soul of chivalry, waited upon us and our baskets and led away the white horse. I already knew some of Mrs. Todd's friends and kindred, and felt like an adopted Bowden in this happy moment. It seemed to be enough for any one to have arrived by the same conveyance as Mrs. Blackett, who presently had her court inside the house, while Mrs. Todd, large, hospitable, and preeminent, was the centre of a rapidly increasing crowd about the lilac bushes. Small companies were continually coming up the long green slope from the water, and nearly all the boats had come to shore. I counted three or four that were baffled by the light breeze, but before long all the Bowdens, small and great, seemed to have assembled, and we started to go up to the grove across the field.

Out of the chattering crowd of noisy children, and large-waisted women whose best black dresses fell straight to the ground in generous folds, and sunburnt men who looked as serious as if it were town-meeting day, there suddenly came silence and order. I saw the straight, soldierly little figure of a man who bore a fine resemblance to Mrs. Blackett, and who appeared to marshal us with perfect ease. He was imperative enough, but with a grand military sort of courtesy, and bore himself with solemn dignity of importance. We were sorted out according to some clear design of his own, and stood as speechless as a troop to await his orders. Even the children were ready to march together, a pretty flock, and at the last moment Mrs. Blackett and a few distinguished companions, the ministers and those who were very old, came out of the house together and took their places. We ranked by fours, and even then we made a long procession.

There was a wide path mowed for us across the field, and, as we moved along, the birds flew up out of the thick second crop of clover, and the bees hummed as if it still were June. There was a flashing of white gulls over the water where the fleet of boats rode the low waves together in the cove, swaying their small masts as if they kept time to our steps. The plash of the water could be heard faintly, yet still be heard; we might have been a company of ancient Greeks going to celebrate a victory, or to worship the god of harvests,[1] in the grove above. It was strangely moving to see this and to make part of it. The sky, the sea, have watched poor humanity at its rites so long; we were no more a New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended, and were only the latest of our line. We possessed the instincts of a far, forgotten childhood; I found myself thinking that we ought to be carrying green branches and singing as we went. So we came to the thick shaded grove still silent, and were set in our places by the straight trees that swayed together and let sunshine through here and there like a single golden leaf that flickered down, vanishing in the cool shade.

The grove was so large that the great family looked far smaller than it had in the open field; there was a thick growth of dark pines and firs with an occasional maple or oak that gave a gleam of color like a bright window in the great roof. On three sides we could see the water, shining behind the tree-trunks, and feel the cool salt breeze that began to come up with the tide just as the day reached its highest point of heat. We could see the green sunlit field we had just crossed as if we looked out at it from a dark room, and the old house and its lilacs standing placidly in the sun, and the great barn with a stockade of carriages from which two or three care-taking men who had lingered were coming across the field together. Mrs. Todd had taken off her warm gloves and looked the picture of content.

"There!" she exclaimed. "I've always meant to have you see this place, but I never looked for such a beautiful opportunity—weather an' occasion both made to match. Yes, it suits me: I don't ask no more. I want to know if you saw mother walkin' at the

1 The elder sister of Zeus and the mother of Persephone, Demeter is the goddess of grain and fertility, and is considered to be the deity who nourishes the earth. She taught humankind the arts of sowing seeds, plowing, and harvesting, and was especially popular with rural folk who were more conservative about keeping to the old ways.

head! It choked me right up to see mother at the head, walkin' with the ministers," and Mrs. Todd turned away to hide the feelings she could not instantly control.

"Who was the marshal?" I hastened to ask. "Was he an old soldier?"

"Don't he do well?" answered Mrs. Todd with satisfaction.

"He don't often have such a chance to show off his gifts," said Mrs. Caplin, a friend from the Landing who had joined us. "That's Sant Bowden; he always takes the lead, such days. Good for nothing else most o' his time; trouble is, he"—

I turned with interest to hear the worst. Mrs. Caplin's tone was both zealous and impressive.

"Stim'lates,"[1] she explained scornfully.

"No, Santin never was in the war," said Mrs. Todd with lofty indifference. "It was a cause of real distress to him. He kep' enlistin', and traveled far an' wide about here, an' even took the bo't and went to Boston to volunteer; but he ain't a sound man, an' they wouldn't have him. They say he knows all their tactics, an' can tell all about the battle o' Waterloo well 's he can Bunker Hill.[2] I told him once the country 'd lost a great general, an' I meant it, too."

"I expect you're near right," said Mrs. Caplin, a little crestfallen and apologetic.

"I be right," insisted Mrs. Todd with much amiability. "'T was most too bad to cramp him down to his peaceful trade, but he's a most excellent shoemaker at his best, an' he always says it's a trade that gives him time to think an' plan his manoeuvres. Over to the Port they always invite him to march Decoration Day,[3] same as the rest, an' he does look noble; he comes of soldier stock."

I had been noticing with great interest the curiously French type of face which prevailed in this rustic company. I had said to myself before that Mrs. Blackett was plainly of French descent, in

1 Drinks to excess.

2 Fought on 18 June 1815, the battle of Waterloo was Napoleon Bonaparte's final battle; his loss brought an end to his rule as emperor. The battle of Bunker Hill was fought on 17 June 1775 as part of the siege of Boston during the American Revolutionary War; though the British won, they suffered their most severe losses of the entire war in this engagement.

3 First begun as a day on the last Monday in May to honor dead Union soldiers after the Civil War, it is now known as Memorial Day and includes all deceased war veterans.

both her appearance and her charming gifts, but this is not surprising when one has learned how large a proportion of the early settlers on this northern coast of New England were of Huguenot blood,[1] and that it is the Norman Englishman, not the Saxon,[2] who goes adventuring to a new world.

"They used to say in old times," said Mrs. Todd modestly, "that our family came of very high folks in France, and one of 'em was a great general in some o' the old wars. I sometimes think that Santin's ability has come 'way down from then. 'T ain't nothin' he's ever acquired; 't was born in him. I don't know 's he ever saw a fine parade, or met with those that studied up such things. He's figured it all out an' got his papers so he knows how to aim a cannon right for William's fish-house five miles out on Green Island, or up there on Burnt Island where the signal is. He had it all over to me one day, an' I tried hard to appear interested. His life's all in it, but he will have those poor gloomy spells come over him now an' then, an' then he has to drink."

Mrs. Caplin gave a heavy sigh.

"There's a great many such strayaway folks, just as there is plants," continued Mrs. Todd, who was nothing if not botanical. "I know of just one sprig of laurel that grows over back here in a wild spot, an' I never could hear of no other on this coast. I had a large bunch brought me once from Massachusetts way, so I know it. This piece grows in an open spot where you'd think 't would do well, but it's sort o' poor-lookin'. I've visited it time an' again, just to notice its poor blooms. 'T is a real Sant Bowden, out of its own place."

Mrs. Caplin looked bewildered and blank. "Well, all I know is, last year he worked out some kind of a plan so 's to parade the county conference in platoons, and got 'em all flustered up tryin' to sense his ideas of a holler square,"[3] she burst forth. "They was holler enough anyway after ridin' 'way down from up country

1 Huguenots were French Protestants who emigrated to North America in the seventeenth century after battling Catholics in several religious wars in sixteenth-century France.

2 Normans were the descendants of the original Viking conquerors of northern Europe. Saxons are a part of the Anglo-Saxon peoples who occupied the southern and eastern parts of England from the early fifth century until the Norman conquest of 1066, in which William the Conqueror gave England over to Norman control after his success at the battle of Hastings.

3 A hollow square is a battle formation that infantry adopt when faced with a cavalry attack.

into the salt air, and they'd been treated to a sermon on faith an' works from old Fayther Harlow that never knows when to cease. 'T wa'n't no time for tactics then,—they wa'n't a-thinkin' of the church military.[1] Sant, he couldn't do nothin' with 'em. All he thinks of, when he sees a crowd, is how to march 'em. 'T is all very well when he don't 'tempt too much. He never did act like other folks."

"Ain't I just been maintainin' that he ain't like 'em?" urged Mrs. Todd decidedly. "Strange folks has got to have strange ways, for what I see."

"Somebody observed once that you could pick out the likeness of 'most every sort of a foreigner when you looked about you in our parish," said Sister Caplin, her face brightening with sudden illumination. "I didn't see the bearin' of it then quite so plain. I always did think Mari' Harris resembled a Chinee."[2]

"Mari' Harris was pretty as a child, I remember," said the pleasant voice of Mrs. Blackett, who, after receiving the affectionate greetings of nearly the whole company, came to join us,—to see, as she insisted, that we were out of mischief.

"Yes, Mari' was one o' them pretty little lambs that make dreadful homely old sheep," replied Mrs. Todd with energy. "Cap'n Littlepage never 'd look so disconsolate if she was any sort of a proper person to direct things. She might divert him; yes, she might divert the old gentleman, an' let him think he had his own way, 'stead o' arguing everything down to the bare bone. 'T wouldn't hurt her to sit down an' hear his great stories once in a while."

"The stories are very interesting," I ventured to say.

"Yes, you always catch yourself a-thinkin' what if they all was true, and he had the right of it," answered Mrs. Todd. "He's a good sight better company, though dreamy, than such sordid creatur's as Mari' Harris."

"Live and let live," said dear old Mrs. Blackett gently. "I haven't seen the captain for a good while, now that I ain't so con-

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1 Military, in this instance, means Church Militant, or Christians on earth who fight against sin in order that, when they die, they might go to heaven and be members of the Church Triumphant, those who have triumphed over sin.

2 Dialect rendering of Chinese. Brete Harte's narrative poem, *The Heathen Chinee*, a satire of anti-Chinese sentiment in northern California, was published in *The Overland Monthly* in September 1870; its original title was *Plain Language From Truthful James*.

stant to meetin'," she added wistfully. "We always have known each other."

"Why, if it is a good pleasant day to-morrow, I'll get William to call an' invite the capt'in to dinner. William'll be in early so 's to pass up the street without meetin' anybody."

"There, they're callin' out it's time to set the tables," said Mrs. Caplin, with great excitement.

"Here's Cousin Sarah Jane Blackett! Well, I am pleased, certain!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd, with unaffected delight; and these kindred spirits met and parted with the promise of a good talk later on. After this there was no more time for conversation until we were seated in order at the long tables.

"I'm one that always dreads seeing some o' the folks that I don't like, at such a time as this," announced Mrs. Todd privately to me after a season of reflection. We were just waiting for the feast to begin. "You wouldn't think such a great creatur' 's I be could feel all over pins an' needles. I remember, the day I promised to Nathan, how it come over me, just 's I was feelin' happy 's I could, that I'd got to have an own cousin o' his for my near relation all the rest o' my life, an' it seemed as if die I should. Poor Nathan saw somethin' had crossed me,—he had very nice feelings,—and when he asked what 't was, I told him. 'I never could like her myself,' said he. 'You sha'n't be bothered, dear,' he says; an' 't was one o' the things that made me set a good deal by Nathan, he didn't make a habit of always opposin', like some men. 'Yes,' says I, 'but think o' Thanksgivin' times an' funerals; she's our relation, an' we've got to own her.' Young folks don't think o' those things. There she goes now, do let's pray her by!"[1] said Mrs. Todd, with an alarming transition from general opinions to particular animosities. "I hate her just the same as I always did; but she's got on a real pretty dress. I do try to remember that she's Nathan's cousin. Oh dear, well; she's gone by after all, an' ain't seen me. I expected she'd come pleasantin' round just to show off an' say afterwards she was acquainted."

This was so different from Mrs. Todd's usual largeness of mind that I had a moment's uneasiness; but the cloud passed quickly over her spirit, and was gone with the offender.

There never was a more generous out-of-door feast along the coast than the Bowden family set forth that day. To call it a picnic would make it seem trivial. The great tables were edged with

1 Let's invite her over.

pretty oak-leaf trimming, which the boys and girls made. We brought flowers from the fence-thickets of the great field; and out of the disorder of flowers and provisions suddenly appeared as orderly a scheme for the feast as the marshal had shaped for the procession. I began to respect the Bowdens for their inheritance of good taste and skill and a certain pleasing gift of formality. Something made them do all these things in a finer way than most country people would have done them. As I looked up and down the tables there was a good cheer, a grave soberness that shone with pleasure, a humble dignity of bearing. There were some who should have sat below the salt[1] for lack of this good breeding; but they were not many. So, I said to myself, their ancestors may have sat in the great hall of some old French house in the Middle Ages, when battles and sieges and processions and feasts were familiar things. The ministers and Mrs. Blackett, with a few of their rank and age, were put in places of honor, and for once that I looked any other way I looked twice at Mrs. Blackett's face, serene and mindful of privilege and responsibility, the mistress by simple fitness of this great day.

Mrs. Todd looked up at the roof of green trees, and then carefully surveyed the company. "I see 'em better now they're all settin' down," she said with satisfaction. "There's old Mr. Gilbraith and his sister. I wish they were sittin' with us; they're not among folks they can parley with, an' they look disappointed."

As the feast went on, the spirits of my companion steadily rose. The excitement of an unexpectedly great occasion was a subtle stimulant to her disposition, and I could see that sometimes when Mrs. Todd had seemed limited and heavily domestic, she had simply grown sluggish for lack of proper surroundings. She was not so much reminiscent now as expectant, and as alert and gay as a girl. We who were her neighbors were full of gayety, which was but the reflected light from her beaming countenance. It was not the first time that I was full of wonder at the waste of human ability in this world, as a botanist wonders at the wastefulness of nature, the thousand seeds that die, the unused provision of every sort. The reserve force of society grows more and more amazing to one's thought. More than one face among the

1 A phrase first seen in print in 1597, to sit below the salt indicated a class and rank division at a European dining table; the host and his favored guests sat at one end, while those of lower rank sat at the other, separated by the salt cellar placed in the middle.

Bowdens showed that only opportunity and stimulus were lacking,—a narrow set of circumstances had caged a fine able character and held it captive. One sees exactly the same types in a country gathering as in the most brilliant city company. You are safe to be understood if the spirit of your speech is the same for one neighbor as for the other.

XIX. The Feast's End

The feast was a noble feast, as has already been said. There was an elegant ingenuity displayed in the form of pies which delighted my heart. Once acknowledge that an American pie is far to be preferred to its humble ancestor, the English tart, and it is joyful to be reassured at a Bowden reunion that invention has not yet failed. Beside a delightful variety of material, the decorations went beyond all my former experience; dates and names were wrought in lines of pastry and frosting on the tops. There was even more elaborate reading matter on an excellent early-apple pie which we began to share and eat, precept upon precept. Mrs. Todd helped me generously to the whole word *Bowden*, and consumed *Reunion* herself, save an undecipherable fragment; but the most renowned essay in cookery on the tables was a model of the old Bowden house made of durable gingerbread, with all the windows and doors in the right places, and sprigs of genuine lilac set at the front. It must have been baked in sections, in one of the last of the great brick ovens, and fastened together on the morning of the day. There was a general sigh when this fell into ruin at the feast's end, and it was shared by a great part of the assembly, not without seriousness, and as if it were a pledge and token of loyalty. I met the maker of the gingerbread house, which had called up lively remembrances of a childish story.[1] She had the gleaming eye of an enthusiast and a look of high ideals.

"I could just as well have made it all of frosted cake," she said, "but 't wouldn't have been the right shade; the old house, as you observe, was never painted, and I concluded that plain gingerbread would represent it best. It wasn't all I expected it would be," she said sadly, as many an artist had said before her of his work.

There were speeches by the ministers; and there proved to be a historian among the Bowdens, who gave some fine anecdotes of

1 In some versions of the brothers Grimm fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel," the witch's house is composed of gingerbread.

the family history; and then appeared a poetess, whom Mrs. Todd regarded with wistful compassion and indulgence, and when the long faded garland of verses came to an appealing end, she turned to me with words of praise.

"Sounded pretty," said the generous listener. "Yes, I thought she did very well. We went to school together, an' Mary Anna had a very hard time; trouble was, her mother thought she'd given birth to a genius, an' Mary Anna's come to believe it herself. There, I don't know what we should have done without her; there ain't nobody else that can write poetry between here and 'way up towards Rockland; it adds a great deal at such a time. When she speaks o' those that are gone, she feels it all, and so does everybody else, but she harps too much. I'd laid half of that away for next time, if I was Mary Anna. There comes mother to speak to her, an' old Mr. Gilbraith's sister; now she'll be heartened right up. Mother'll say just the right thing."

The leave-takings were as affecting as the meetings of these old friends had been. There were enough young persons at the reunion, but it is the old who really value such opportunities; as for the young, it is the habit of every day to meet their comrades,—the time of separation has not come. To see the joy with which these elder kinsfolk and acquaintances had looked in one another's faces, and the lingering touch of their friendly hands; to see these affectionate meetings and then the reluctant partings, gave one a new idea of the isolation in which it was possible to live in that after all thinly settled region. They did not expect to see one another again very soon; the steady, hard work on the farms, the difficulty of getting from place to place, especially in winter when boats were laid up, gave double value to any occasion which could bring a large number of families together. Even funerals in this country of the pointed firs were not without their social advantages and satisfactions. I heard the words "next summer" repeated many times, though summer was still ours and all the leaves were green.

The boats began to put out from shore, and the wagons to drive away. Mrs. Blackett took me into the old house when we came back from the grove: it was her father's birthplace and early home, and she had spent much of her own childhood there with her grandmother. She spoke of those days as if they had but lately passed; in fact, I could imagine that the house looked almost exactly the same to her. I could see the brown rafters of the unfinished roof as I looked up the steep staircase, though the best room was as handsome with its good wainscoting and

touch of ornament on the cornice as any old room of its day in a town.

Some of the guests who came from a distance were still sitting in the best room when we went in to take leave of the master and mistress of the house. We all said eagerly what a pleasant day it had been, and how swiftly the time had passed. Perhaps it is the great national anniversaries which our country has lately kept,[1] and the soldiers' meetings that take place everywhere, which have made reunions of every sort the fashion. This one, at least, had been very interesting. I fancied that old feuds had been overlooked, and the old saying that blood is thicker than water had again proved itself true, though from the variety of names one argued a certain adulteration of the Bowden traits and belongings. Clannishness is an instinct of the heart,—it is more than a birthright, or a custom; and lesser rights were forgotten in the claim to a common inheritance.

We were among the very last to return to our proper lives and lodgings. I came near to feeling like a true Bowden, and parted from certain new friends as if they were old friends; we were rich with the treasure of a new remembrance.

At last we were in the high wagon again; the old white horse had been well fed in the Bowden barn, and we drove away and soon began to climb the long hill toward the wooded ridge. The road was new to me, as roads always are, going back. Most of our companions had been full of anxious thoughts of home,—of the cows, or of young children likely to fall into disaster,—but we had no reasons for haste, and drove slowly along, talking and resting by the way. Mrs. Todd said once that she really hoped her front door had been shut on account of the dust blowing in, but added that nothing made any weight on her mind except not to forget to turn a few late mullein leaves that were drying on a newspaper in the little loft. Mrs. Blackett and I gave our word of honor that we would remind her of this heavy responsibility. The way seemed short, we had so much to talk about. We climbed hills where we could see the great bay and the islands, and then went down into shady valleys where the air began to feel like evening, cool and damp with a fragrance of

1 To commemorate the 1776 signing of the US *Declaration of Independence,* the International Centennial Exhibition took place in Philadelphia in 1876. The World's Columbian Exposition (also called the Chicago World's Fair) was held in 1893 to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of the New World.

wet ferns. Mrs. Todd alighted once or twice, refusing all assistance in securing some boughs of a rare shrub which she valued for its bark, though she proved incommunicative as to her reasons. We passed the house where we had been so kindly entertained with doughnuts earlier in the day, and found it closed and deserted, which was a disappointment.

"They must have stopped to tea somewheres and thought they'd finish up the day," said Mrs. Todd. "Those that enjoyed it best'll want to get right home so 's to think it over."

"I didn't see the woman there after all, did you?" asked Mrs. Blackett as the horse stopped to drink at the trough.

"Oh yes, I spoke with her," answered Mrs. Todd, with but scant interest or approval. "She ain't a member o' our family."

"I thought you said she resembled Cousin Pa'lina Bowden about the forehead," suggested Mrs. Blackett.

"Well, she don't," answered Mrs. Todd impatiently. "I ain't one that's ord'narily mistaken about family likenesses, and she didn't seem to meet with friends, so I went square up to her. 'I expect you're a Bowden by your looks,' says I. 'Yes, I can take it you're one o' the Bowdens.' 'Lor', no,' says she. 'Dennett was my maiden name, but I married a Bowden for my first husband. I thought I'd come an' just see what was a-goin' on!"

Mrs. Blackett laughed heartily. "I'm goin' to remember to tell William o' that," she said. "There, Almiry, the only thing that's troubled me all this day is to think how William would have enjoyed it. I do so wish William had been there."

"I sort of wish he had, myself," said Mrs. Todd frankly.

"There wa'n't many old folks there, somehow," said Mrs. Blackett, with a touch of sadness in her voice. "There ain't so many to come as there used to be, I'm aware, but I expected to see more."

"I thought they turned out pretty well, when you come to think of it; why, everybody was sayin' so an' feelin' gratified," answered Mrs. Todd hastily with pleasing unconsciousness; then I saw the quick color flash into her cheek, and presently she made some excuse to turn and steal an anxious look at her mother. Mrs. Blackett was smiling and thinking about her happy day, though she began to look a little tired. Neither of my companions was troubled by her burden of years. I hoped in my heart that I might be like them as I lived on into age, and then smiled to think that I too was no longer very young. So we always keep the same hearts, though our outer framework fails and shows the touch of time.

"'T was pretty when they sang the hymn, wasn't it?" asked

Mrs. Blackett at suppertime, with real enthusiasm. "There was such a plenty o' men's voices; where I sat it did sound beautiful. I had to stop and listen when they came to the last verse."

I saw that Mrs. Todd's broad shoulders began to shake. "There was good singers there; yes, there was excellent singers," she agreed heartily, putting down her teacup, "but I chanced to drift alongside Mis' Peter Bowden o' Great Bay, an' I couldn't help thinkin' if she was as far out o' town as she was out o' tune, she wouldn't get back in a day."

XX. Along Shore

One day as I went along the shore beyond the old wharves and the newer, high-stepped fabric of the steamer landing, I saw that all the boats were beached, and the slack water period of the early afternoon prevailed. Nothing was going on, not even the most leisurely of occupations, like baiting trawls or mending nets, or repairing lobster pots; the very boats seemed to be taking an afternoon nap in the sun. I could hardly discover a distant sail as I looked seaward, except a weather-beaten lobster smack,[1] which seemed to have been taken for a plaything by the light airs that blew about the bay. It drifted and turned about so aimlessly in the wide reach off Burnt Island, that I suspected there was nobody at the wheel, or that she might have parted her rusty anchor chain while all the crew were asleep.

I watched her for a minute or two; she was the old Miranda, owned by some of the Caplins, and I knew her by an odd shaped patch of newish duck[2] that was set into the peak of her dingy mainsail. Her vagaries offered such an exciting subject for conversation that my heart rejoiced at the sound of a hoarse voice behind me. At that moment, before I had time to answer, I saw something large and shapeless flung from the Miranda's deck that splashed the water high against her black side, and my companion gave a satisfied chuckle. The old lobster smack's sail caught the breeze again at this moment, and she moved off down the bay. Turning, I found old Elijah Tilley, who had come softly out of his dark fish house, as if it were a burrow.

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1 Noted for their speed, lobster smacks were sailing ships built from the 1860s to 1900, and were the preferred in-shore fishing boats of lobstermen along the Maine coast.

2 A durable, heavy cotton or linen fabric.

"Boy got kind o' drowsy steerin' of her; Monroe he hove him right overboard; 'wake now fast enough," explained Mr. Tilley, and we laughed together.

I was delighted, for my part, that the vicissitudes and dangers of the Miranda, in a rocky channel, should have given me this opportunity to make acquaintance with an old fisherman to whom I had never spoken. At first he had seemed to be one of those evasive and uncomfortable persons who are so suspicious of you that they make you almost suspicious of yourself. Mr. Elijah Tilley appeared to regard a stranger with scornful indifference. You might see him standing on the pebble beach or in a fish-house doorway, but when you came nearer he was gone. He was one of the small company of elderly, gaunt-shaped great fishermen whom I used to like to see leading up a deep-laden boat by the head, as if it were a horse, from the water's edge to the steep slope of the pebble beach. There were four of these large old men at the Landing, who were the survivors of an earlier and more vigorous generation. There was an alliance and understanding between them, so close that it was apparently speechless. They gave much time to watching one another's boats go out or come in; they lent a ready hand at tending one another's lobster traps in rough weather; they helped to clean the fish, or to sliver porgies[1] for the trawls, as if they were in close partnership; and when a boat came in from deep-sea fishing they were never too far out of the way, and hastened to help carry it ashore, two by two, splashing alongside, or holding its steady head, as if it were a willful sea colt. As a matter of fact no boat could help being steady and way-wise under their instant direction and companionship. Abel's boat and Jonathan Bowden's boat were as distinct and experienced personalities as the men themselves, and as inexpressive. Arguments and opinions were unknown to the conversation of these ancient friends; you would as soon have expected to hear small talk in a company of elephants as to hear old Mr. Bowden or Elijah Tilley and their two mates waste breath upon any form of trivial gossip. They made brief statements to one another from time to time. As you came to know them you wondered more and more that they should talk at all. Speech seemed to be a light and elegant accomplishment, and their unexpected acquaintance with its arts made them of new value to

1 A small silver fish with prominent scales, the most common porgy in the Northeast is also called a scup. To sliver a porgy is to cut it into slender pieces.

the listener. You felt almost as if a landmark pine should suddenly address you in regard to the weather, or a lofty-minded old camel make a remark as you stood respectfully near him under the circus tent.

I often wondered a great deal about the inner life and thought of these self-contained old fishermen; their minds seemed to be fixed upon nature and the elements rather than upon any contrivances of man, like politics or theology. My friend, Captain Bowden, who was the nephew of the eldest of this group, regarded them with deference; but he did not belong to their secret companionship, though he was neither young nor talkative.

"They've gone together ever since they were boys, they know most everything about the sea amon'st them," he told me once. "They was always just as you see 'em now since the memory of man."

These ancient seafarers had houses and lands not outwardly different from other Dunnet Landing dwellings, and two of them were fathers of families, but their true dwelling places were the sea, and the stony beach that edged its familiar shore, and the fishhouses, where much salt brine from the mackerel kits[1] had soaked the very timbers into a state of brown permanence and petrifaction. It had also affected the old fishermen's hard complexions, until one fancied that when Death claimed them it could only be with the aid, not of any slender modern dart, but the good serviceable harpoon of a seventeenth century woodcut.

Elijah Tilley was such an evasive, discouraged-looking person, heavy-headed, and stooping so that one could never look him in the face, that even after his friendly exclamation about Monroe Pennell, the lobster smack's skipper, and the sleepy boy, I did not venture at once to speak again. Mr. Tilley was carrying a small haddock[2] in one hand, and presently shifted it to the other hand lest it might touch my skirt. I knew that my company was accepted, and we walked together a little way.

"You mean to have a good supper," I ventured to say, by way of friendliness.

"Goin' to have this 'ere haddock an' some o' my good baked potatoes; must eat to live," responded my companion with great pleasantness and open approval. I found that I had suddenly left

1 Wooden fish tubs or pails, smaller at the top than at the bottom.

2 A north Atlantic marine fish, popular for eating and so widely fished commercially.

the forbidding coast and come into a smooth little harbor of friendship.

"You ain't never been up to my place," said the old man. "Folks don't come now as they used to; no, 't ain't no use to ask folks now. My poor dear she was a great hand to draw young company."

I remembered that Mrs. Todd had once said that this old fisherman had been sore stricken and unconsoled at the death of his wife.

"I should like very much to come," said I. "Perhaps you are going to be at home later on?"

Mr. Tilley agreed, by a sober nod, and went his way bent-shouldered and with a rolling gait. There was a new patch high on the shoulder of his old waistcoat, which corresponded to the renewing of the Miranda's mainsail down the bay, and I wondered if his own fingers, clumsy with much deep-sea fishing, had set it in.

"Was there a good catch to-day?" I asked, stopping a moment. "I didn't happen to be on the shore when the boats came in."

"No; all come in pretty light," answered Mr. Tilley. "Addicks an' Bowden they done the best; Abel an' me we had but a slim fare. We went out 'arly, but not so 'arly as sometimes; looked like a poor mornin'. I got nine haddick, all small, and seven fish; the rest on 'em got more fish than haddick. Well, I don't expect they feel like bitin' every day; we l'arn to humor 'em a little, an' let 'em have their way 'bout it. These plaguey dog-fish[1] kind of worry 'em." Mr. Tilley pronounced the last sentence with much sympathy, as if he looked upon himself as a true friend of all the haddock and codfish that lived on the fishing grounds, and so we parted.

Later in the afternoon I went along the beach again until I came to the foot of Mr. Tilley's land, and found his rough track across the cobble-stones and rocks to the field edge, where there was a heavy piece of old wreck timber, like a ship's bone, full of treenails.[2] From this a little footpath, narrow with one man's treading, led up across the small green field that made Mr. Tilley's whole estate, except a straggling pasture that tilted on

1 Small sharks found in the north Atlantic.

2 A wooden peg, or dowel, used to fasten pieces of wood together, especially in shipbuilding. Because wood swells when wet, these nails formed tighter bonds as they absorbed water.

edge up the steep hillside beyond the house and road. I could hear the tinkle-tankle of a cow-bell somewhere among the spruces by which the pasture was being walked over and forested from every side; it was likely to be called the wood lot before long, but the field was unmolested. I could not see a bush or a brier anywhere within its walls, and hardly a stray pebble showed itself. This was most surprising in that country of firm ledges, and scattered stones which all the walls that industry could devise had hardly begun to clear away off the land. In the narrow field I noticed some stout stakes, apparently planted at random in the grass and among the hills of potatoes, but carefully painted yellow and white to match the house, a neat sharp-edged little dwelling, which looked strangely modern for its owner. I should have much sooner believed that the smart young wholesale egg merchant of the Landing was its occupant than Mr. Tilley, since a man's house is really but his larger body, and expresses in a way his nature and character.

I went up the field, following the smooth little path to the side door. As for using the front door, that was a matter of great ceremony; the long grass grew close against the high stone step, and a snowberry bush[1] leaned over it, top-heavy with the weight of a morning-glory vine that had managed to take what the fishermen might call a half hitch about the door-knob. Elijah Tilley came to the side door to receive me; he was knitting a blue yarn stocking without looking on, and was warmly dressed for the season in a thick blue flannel shirt with white crockery buttons, a faded waistcoat and trousers heavily patched at the knees. These were not his fishing clothes. There was something delightful in the grasp of his hand, warm and clean, as if it never touched anything but the comfortable woolen yarn, instead of cold sea water and slippery fish.

"What are the painted stakes for, down in the field?" I hastened to ask, and he came out a step or two along the path to see; and looked at the stakes as if his attention were called to them for the first time.

"Folks laughed at me when I first bought this place an' come here to live," he explained. "They said 't wa'n't no kind of a field privilege at all; no place to raise anything, all full o' stones. I was aware 't was good land, an' I worked some on it—odd times when

1 A member of the Honeysuckle family, snowberry bushes have white berries that are good winter sources of food for birds but are poisonous to humans.

I didn't have nothin' else on hand—till I cleared them loose stones all out. You never see a prettier piece than 't is now; now did ye? Well, as for them painted marks, them's my buoys. I struck on to some heavy rocks that didn't show none, but a plow'd be liable to ground on 'em, an' so I ketched holt an' buoyed 'em same's you see. They don't trouble me no more 'n if they wa'n't there."

"You haven't been to sea for nothing," I said laughing.

"One trade helps another," said Elijah with an amiable smile. "Come right in an' set down. Come in an' rest ye," he exclaimed, and led the way into his comfortable kitchen. The sunshine poured in at the two further windows, and a cat was curled up sound asleep on the table that stood between them. There was a new-looking light oilcloth of a tiled pattern on the floor, and a crockery teapot, large for a household of only one person, stood on the bright stove. I ventured to say that somebody must be a very good housekeeper.

"That's me," acknowledged the old fisherman with frankness. "There ain't nobody here but me. I try to keep things looking right, same's poor dear left 'em. You set down here in this chair, then you can look off an' see the water. None on 'em thought I was goin' to get along alone, no way, but I wa'n't goin' to have my house turned upsi' down an' all changed about; no, not to please nobody. I was the only one knew just how she liked to have things set, poor dear, an' I said I was goin' to make shift, and I have made shift. I'd rather tough it out alone." And he sighed heavily, as if to sigh were his familiar consolation.

We were both silent for a minute; the old man looked out the window, as if he had forgotten I was there.

"You must miss her very much?" I said at last.

"I do miss her," he answered, and sighed again. "Folks all kep' repeatin' that time would ease me, but I can't find it does. No, I miss her just the same every day."

"How long is it since she died?" I asked.

"Eight year now, come the first of October. It don't seem near so long. I've got a sister that comes and stops 'long o' me a little spell, spring an' fall, an' odd times if I send after her. I ain't near so good a hand to sew as I be to knit, and she's very quick to set everything to rights. She's a married woman with a family; her son's folks lives at home, an' I can't make no great claim on her time. But it makes me a kind o' good excuse, when I do send, to help her a little; she ain't none too well off. Poor dear always liked her, and we used to contrive our ways together. 'T is full as easy

to be alone. I set here an' think it all over, an' think considerable when the weather's bad to go outside. I get so some days it feels as if poor dear might step right back into this kitchen. I keep a watchin' them doors as if she might step in to ary one. Yes, ma'am, I keep a-lookin' off an' droppin' o' my stitches; that's just how it seems. I can't git over losin' of her no way nor no how. Yes, ma'am, that's just how it seems to me."

I did not say anything, and he did not look up.

"I git feelin' so sometimes I have to lay everything by an' go out door. She was a sweet pretty creatur' long 's she lived," the old man added mournfully. "There's that little rockin' chair o' her'n, I set an' notice it an' think how strange 't is a creatur' like her should be gone an' that chair be here right in its old place."

"I wish I had known her; Mrs. Todd told me about your wife one day," I said.

"You'd have liked to come and see her; all the folks did," said poor Elijah. "She'd been so pleased to hear everything and see somebody new that took such an int'rest. She had a kind o' gift to make it pleasant for folks. I guess likely Almiry Todd told you she was a pretty woman, especially in her young days; late years, too, she kep' her looks and come to be so pleasant lookin'. There, 't ain't so much matter, I shall be done afore a great while. No; I sha'n't trouble the fish a great sight more."

The old widower sat with his head bowed over his knitting, as if he were hastily shortening the very thread of time.[1] The minutes went slowly by. He stopped his work and clasped his hands firmly together. I saw he had forgotten his guest, and I kept the afternoon watch with him. At last he looked up as if but a moment had passed of his continual loneliness.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm one that has seen trouble," he said, and began to knit again.

The visible tribute of his careful housekeeping, and the clean bright room which had once enshrined his wife, and now enshrined her memory, was very moving to me; he had no thought for any one else or for any other place. I began to see her myself in her home,—a delicate-looking, faded little woman, who leaned upon his rough strength and affectionate heart, who was always watching for his boat out of this very window, and who always opened the door and welcomed him when he came home.

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1 The Moirae, or three Greek fates, controlled the thread of every mortal's lifetime. They were Clotho, who spun the thread, Lachesis, who measured it, and Atropos, who cut the thread and ended a life.

"I used to laugh at her, poor dear," said Elijah, as if he read my thought. "I used to make light of her timid notions. She used to be fearful when I was out in bad weather or baffled about gittin' ashore. She used to say the time seemed long to her, but I've found out all about it now. I used to be dreadful thoughtless when I was a young man and the fish was bitin' well. I'd stay out late some o' them days, an' I expect she'd watch an' watch an' lose heart a-waitin'. My heart alive! what a supper she'd git, an' be right there watchin' from the door, with somethin' over her head if 't was cold, waitin' to hear all about it as I come up the field. Lord, how I think o' all them little things!"

"This was what she called the best room; in this way," he said presently, laying his knitting on the table, and leading the way across the front entry and unlocking a door, which he threw open with an air of pride. The best room seemed to me a much sadder and more empty place than the kitchen; its conventionalities lacked the simple perfection of the humbler room and failed on the side of poor ambition; it was only when one remembered what patient saving, and what high respect for society in the abstract go to such furnishing that the little parlor was interesting at all. I could imagine the great day of certain purchases, the bewildering shops of the next large town, the aspiring anxious woman, the clumsy sea-tanned man in his best clothes, so eager to be pleased, but at ease only when they were safe back in the sail-boat again, going down the bay with their precious freight, the hoarded money all spent and nothing to think of but tiller and sail. I looked at the unworn carpet, the glass vases on the mantelpiece with their prim bunches of bleached swamp grass and dusty marsh rosemary,[1] and I could read the history of Mrs. Tilley's best room from its very beginning.

"You see for yourself what beautiful rugs she could make; now I'm going to show you her best tea things she thought so much of," said the master of the house, opening the door of a shallow cupboard. "That's real chiny, all of it on those two shelves," he told me proudly. "I bought it all myself, when we was first married, in the port of Bordeaux.[2] There never was one single piece of it broke until—Well, I used to say, long as she lived, there never was a piece broke, but long at the last I noticed she'd look

1 Common in the salt marshes on the Atlantic shore, marsh rosemary is a strong astringent and has been used as a domestic remedy for diarrhea and laryngitis.

2 A port city in southwest France.

kind o' distressed, an' I thought 't was 'count o' me boastin'. When they asked if they should use it when the folks was here to supper, time o' her funeral, I knew she'd want to have everything nice, and I said 'certain.' Some o' the women they come runnin' to me an' called me, while they was takin' of the chiny down, an' showed me there was one o' the cups broke an' the pieces wropped in paper and pushed way back here, corner o' the shelf. They didn't want me to go an' think they done it. Poor dear! I had to put right out o' the house when I see that. I knowed in one minute how 't was. We'd got so used to sayin' 't was all there just 's I fetched it home, an' so when she broke that cup somehow or 'nother she couldn't frame no words to come an' tell me. She couldn't think 't would vex me, 't was her own hurt pride. I guess there wa'n't no other secret ever lay between us."

The French cups with their gay sprigs of pink and blue, the best tumblers, an old flowered bowl and tea caddy, and a japanned waiter[1] or two adorned the shelves. These, with a few daguerreotypes in a little square pile, had the closet to themselves, and I was conscious of much pleasure in seeing them. One is shown over many a house in these days where the interest may be more complex, but not more definite.

"Those were her best things, poor dear," said Elijah as he locked the door again. "She told me that last summer before she was taken away that she couldn't think o' anything more she wanted, there was everything in the house, an' all her rooms was furnished pretty. I was goin' over to the Port, an' inquired for errands. I used to ask her to say what she wanted, cost or no cost—she was a very reasonable woman, an' 't was the place where she done all but her extra shopping. It kind o' chilled me up when she spoke so satisfied."

"You don't go out fishing after Christmas?" I asked, as we came back to the bright kitchen.

"No; I take stiddy to my knitting after January sets in," said the old seafarer. "'T ain't worth while, fish make off into deeper water an' you can't stand no such perishin' for the sake o' what you get. I leave out a few traps in sheltered coves an' do a little lobsterin' on fair days. The young fellows braves it out, some on 'em; but, for me, I lay in my winter's yarn an' set here where 't is warm, an' knit an' take my comfort. Mother learnt me once when I was a lad; she was a beautiful knitter herself. I was laid up with

1 A carrying tray lacquered with a brilliant varnish, in the manner of the Japanese.

a bad knee, an' she said 't would take up my time an' help her; we was a large family. They'll buy all the folks can do down here to Addicks' store. They say our Dunnet stockin's is gettin' to be celebrated up to Boston,—good quality o' wool an' even knittin' or somethin'. I've always been called a pretty hand to do nettin', but seines[1] is master cheap to what they used to be when they was all hand worked. I change off to nettin' long towards spring, and I piece up my trawls and lines and get my fishin' stuff to rights. Lobster pots they require attention, but I make 'em up in spring weather when it's warm there in the barn. No; I ain't one o' them that likes to set an' do nothin'."

"You see the rugs, poor dear did them; she wa'n't very partial to knittin'," old Elijah went on, after he had counted his stitches. "Our rugs is beginnin' to show wear, but I can't master none o' them womanish tricks. My sister, she tinkers 'em up. She said last time she was here that she guessed they'd last my time."

"The old ones are always the prettiest," I said.

"You ain't referrin' to the braided ones now?" answered Mr. Tilley. "You see ours is braided for the most part, an' their good looks is all in the beginnin'. Poor dear used to say they made an easier floor. I go shufflin' round the house same's if 't was a bo't, and I always used to be stubbin' up the corners o' the hooked kind. Her an' me was always havin' our jokes together same's a boy an' girl. Outsiders never'd know nothin' about it to see us. She had nice manners with all, but to me there was nobody so entertainin'. She'd take off anybody's natural talk winter evenin's when we set here alone, so you'd think 't was them a-speakin'. There, there!"

I saw that he had dropped a stitch again, and was snarling the blue yarn round his clumsy fingers. He handled it and threw it off at arm's length as if it were a cod line; and frowned impatiently, but I saw a tear shining on his cheek.

I said that I must be going, it was growing late, and asked if I might come again, and if he would take me out to the fishing grounds some day.

"Yes, come any time you want to," said my host, "'t ain't so pleasant as when poor dear was here. Oh, I didn't want to lose her an' she didn't want to go, but it had to be. Such things ain't for us to say; there's no yes an' no to it."

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1 A large fishing net that hangs vertically with weights on the bottom and floats on the top.

"You find Almiry Todd one o' the best o' women?" said Mr. Tilley as we parted. He was standing in the doorway and I had started off down the narrow green field. "No, there ain't a better hearted woman in the State o' Maine. I've known her from a girl. She's had the best o' mothers. You tell her I'm liable to fetch her up a couple or three nice good mackerel early to-morrow," he said. "Now don't let it slip your mind. Poor dear, she always thought a sight o' Almiry, and she used to remind me there was nobody to fish for her; but I don't rec'lect it as I ought to. I see you drop a line yourself very handy now an' then."

We laughed together like the best of friends, and I spoke again about the fishing grounds, and confessed that I had no fancy for a southerly breeze and a ground swell.

"Nor me neither," said the old fisherman. "Nobody likes 'em, say what they may. Poor dear was disobliged by the mere sight of a bo't. Almiry 's got the best o' mothers, I expect you know; Mis' Blackett out to Green Island; and we was always plannin' to go out when summer come; but there, I couldn't pick no day's weather that seemed to suit her just right. I never set out to worry her neither, 't wa'n't no kind o' use; she was so pleasant we couldn't have no fret nor trouble. 'T was never 'you dear an' you darlin' 'afore folks, an' 'you divil' behind the door!"

As I looked back from the lower end of the field I saw him still standing, a lonely figure in the doorway. "Poor dear," I repeated to myself half aloud; "I wonder where she is and what she knows of the little world she left. I wonder what she has been doing these eight years!"

I gave the message about the mackerel to Mrs. Todd.

"Been visitin' with 'Lijah?" she asked with interest. "I expect you had kind of a dull session; he ain't the talkin' kind; dwellin' so much long o' fish seems to make 'em lose the gift o' speech." But when I told her that Mr. Tilley had been talking to me that day, she interrupted me quickly.

"Then 't was all about his wife, an' he can't say nothin' too pleasant neither. She was modest with strangers, but there ain't one o' her old friends can ever make up her loss. For me, I don't want to go there no more. There's some folks you miss and some folks you don't, when they're gone, but there ain't hardly a day I don't think o' dear Sarah Tilley. She was always right there; yes, you knew just where to find her like a plain flower. 'Lijah's worthy enough; I do esteem 'Lijah, but he's a ploddin' man."

XXI. The Backward View

At last it was the time of late summer, when the house was cool and damp in the morning, and all the light seemed to come through green leaves; but at the first step out of doors the sunshine always laid a warm hand on my shoulder, and the clear, high sky seemed to lift quickly as I looked at it. There was no autumnal mist on the coast, nor any August fog; instead of these, the sea, the sky, all the long shore line and the inland hills, with every bush of bay and every fir-top, gained a deeper color and a sharper clearness. There was something shining in the air, and a kind of lustre on the water and the pasture grass,—a northern look that, except at this moment of the year, one must go far to seek. The sunshine of a northern summer was coming to its lovely end.

The days were few then at Dunnet Landing, and I let each of them slip away unwillingly as a miser spends his coins. I wished to have one of my first weeks back again, with those long hours when nothing happened except the growth of herbs and the course of the sun. Once I had not even known where to go for a walk; now there were many delightful things to be done and done again, as if I were in London. I felt hurried and full of pleasant engagements, and the days flew by like a handful of flowers flung to the sea wind.

At last I had to say good-by to all my Dunnet Landing friends, and my homelike place in the little house, and return to the world in which I feared to find myself a foreigner. There may be restrictions to such a summer's happiness, but the ease that belongs to simplicity is charming enough to make up for whatever a simple life may lack, and the gifts of peace are not for those who live in the thick of battle.

I was to take the small unpunctual steamer that went down the bay in the afternoon, and I sat for a while by my window looking out on the green herb garden, with regret for company. Mrs. Todd had hardly spoken all day except in the briefest and most disapproving way; it was as if we were on the edge of a quarrel. It seemed impossible to take my departure with anything like composure. At last I heard a footstep, and looked up to find that Mrs. Todd was standing at the door.

"I've seen to everything now," she told me in an unusually loud and business-like voice. "Your trunks are on the w'arf by this time. Cap'n Bowden he come and took 'em down himself, an' is

going to see that they're safe aboard. Yes, I've seen to all your 'rangements," she repeated in a gentler tone. "These things I've left on the kitchen table you'll want to carry by hand; the basket needn't be returned. I guess I shall walk over towards the Port now an' inquire how old Mis' Edward Caplin is."

I glanced at my friend's face, and saw a look that touched me to the heart. I had been sorry enough before to go away.

"I guess you'll excuse me if I ain't down there to stand round on the w'arf and see you go," she said, still trying to be gruff. "Yes, I ought to go over and inquire for Mis' Edward Caplin; it's her third shock, and if mother gets in on Sunday she'll want to know just how the old lady is." With this last word Mrs. Todd turned and left me as if with sudden thought of something she had forgotten, so that I felt sure she was coming back, but presently I heard her go out of the kitchen door and walk down the path toward the gate. I could not part so; I ran after her to say good-by, but she shook her head and waved her hand without looking back when she heard my hurrying steps, and so went away down the street.

When I went in again the little house had suddenly grown lonely, and my room looked empty as it had the day I came. I and all my belongings had died out of it, and I knew how it would seem when Mrs. Todd came back and found her lodger gone. So we die before our own eyes; so we see some chapters of our lives come to their natural end.

I found the little packages on the kitchen table. There was a quaint West Indian[1] basket which I knew its owner had valued, and which I had once admired; there was an affecting provision laid beside it for my seafaring supper, with a neatly tied bunch of southernwood and a twig of bay,[2] and a little old leather box which held the coral pin that Nathan Todd brought home to give to poor Joanna.

There was still an hour to wait, and I went up the hill just above the schoolhouse and sat there thinking of things, and looking off to sea, and watching for the boat to come in sight. I could see Green Island, small and darkly wooded at that dis-

1 A basket from one of the Caribbean islands.

2 For southernwood, see note 1, p. 42. Bay leaves are aromatic and part of the laurel family; they are used in cooking for their flavor. In ancient Greece, scholars and poets were honored with garlands made from the bay laurel tree.

tance; below me were the houses of the village with their apple-trees and bits of garden ground. Presently, as I looked at the pastures beyond, I caught a last glimpse of Mrs. Todd herself, walking slowly in the footpath that led along, following the shore toward the Port. At such a distance one can feel the large, positive qualities that control a character. Close at hand, Mrs. Todd seemed able and warm-hearted and quite absorbed in her bustling industries, but her distant figure looked mateless and appealing, with something about it that was strangely self-possessed and mysterious. Now and then she stooped to pick something,—it might have been her favorite pennyroyal,—and at last I lost sight of her as she slowly crossed an open space on one of the higher points of land, and disappeared again behind a dark clump of juniper and the pointed firs.

As I came away on the little coastwise steamer, there was an old sea running[1] which made the surf leap high on all the rocky shores. I stood on deck, looking back, and watched the busy gulls agree and turn, and sway together down the long slopes of air, then separate hastily and plunge into the waves. The tide was setting in, and plenty of small fish were coming with it, unconscious of the silver flashing of the great birds overhead and the quickness of their fierce beaks. The sea was full of life and spirit, the tops of the waves flew back as if they were winged like the gulls themselves, and like them had the freedom of the wind. Out in the main channel we passed a bent-shouldered old fisherman bound for the evening round among his lobster traps. He was toiling along with short oars, and the dory tossed and sank and tossed again with the steamer's waves. I saw that it was old Elijah Tilley, and though we had so long been strangers we had come to be warm friends, and I wished that he had waited for one of his mates, it was such hard work to row along shore through rough seas and tend the traps alone. As we passed I waved my hand and tried to call to him, and he looked up and answered my farewells by a solemn nod. The little town, with the tall masts of its disabled schooners in the inner bay, stood high above the flat sea for a few minutes, then it sank back into the uniformity of the coast, and became indistinguishable from the other towns that looked as if they were crumbled on the furzy-green stoniness of the shore.

The small outer islands of the bay were covered among the ledges with turf that looked as fresh as the early grass; there had

1 Strong and significant waves that have outlasted the equally strong winds that created them and which have since abated.

been some days of rain the week before, and the darker green of the sweet-fern was scattered on all the pasture heights. It looked like the beginning of summer ashore, though the sheep, round and warm in their winter wool, betrayed the season of the year as they went feeding along the slopes in the low afternoon sunshine. Presently the wind began to blow, and we struck out seaward to double the long sheltering headland of the cape, and when I looked back again, the islands and the headland had run together and Dunnet Landing and all its coasts were lost to sight.

The Dunnet Landing Stories

The Queen's Twin (1899)

I.

The coast of Maine was in former years brought so near to foreign shores by its busy fleet of ships that among the older men and women one still finds a surprising proportion of travelers. Each seaward-stretching headland with its high-set houses, each island of a single farm, has sent its spies to view many a Land of Eschol;[1] one may see plain, contented old faces at the windows, whose eyes have looked at far-away ports and known the splendors of the Eastern world. They shame the easy voyager of the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean; they have rounded the Cape of Good Hope and braved the angry seas of Cape Horn in small wooden ships;[2] they have brought up their hardy boys and girls on narrow decks; they were among the last of the Northmen's children[3] to go adventuring to unknown shores. More than this one cannot give to a young State for its enlightenment; the sea captains and the captains' wives of Maine knew something of the wide world, and never mistook their native parishes for the whole instead of a part thereof; they knew not only Thomaston and Castine and Portland,[4] but London and Bristol and Bordeaux, and the strange-mannered harbors of the China Sea.

One September day, when I was nearly at the end of a summer spent in a village called Dunnet Landing, on the Maine coast, my friend Mrs. Todd, in whose house I lived, came home from a long, solitary stroll in the wild pastures, with an eager look as if she were just starting on a hopeful quest instead of returning. She brought a little basket with blackberries enough for supper, and held it towards me so that I could see that there were also some late and surprising raspberries sprinkled on top, but she made no comment upon her wayfaring. I could tell plainly that she had something very important to say.

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1 Numbers 13:23: "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs."

2 The Cape of Good Hope is a rocky headland off the Atlantic coast of South Africa. Cape Horn island is part of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago of southern Chile.

3 Jewett elaborated her belief in the Viking ancestry of New England in *The Story of the Normans: Told Chiefly in Relation to Their Conquest of England* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1887).

4 Mid- and southern coastal towns on the Maine coast.

"You haven't brought home a leaf of anything," I ventured to this practiced herb-gatherer. "You were saying yesterday that the witch hazel might be in bloom."

"I dare say, dear," she answered in a lofty manner; "I ain't goin' to say it wasn't; I ain't much concerned either way 'bout the facts o' witch hazel. Truth is, I've been off visitin'; there's an old Indian footpath leadin' over towards the Back Shore through the great heron swamp that anybody can't travel over all summer. You have to seize your time some day just now, while the low ground's summer-dried as it is to-day, and before the fall rains set in. I never thought of it till I was out o' sight o' home, and I says to myself, 'To-day's the day, certain!' and stepped along smart as I could. Yes, I've been visitin'. I did get into one spot that was wet underfoot before I noticed; you wait till I get me a pair o' dry woolen stockings, in case of cold, and I'll come an' tell ye."

Mrs. Todd disappeared. I could see that something had deeply interested her. She might have fallen in with either the sea-serpent or the lost tribes of Israel,[1] such was her air of mystery and satisfaction. She had been away since just before mid-morning, and as I sat waiting by my window I saw the last red glow of autumn sunshine flare along the gray rocks of the shore and leave them cold again, and touch the far sails of some coast-wise schooners so that they stood like golden houses on the sea.

I was left to wonder longer than I liked. Mrs. Todd was making an evening fire and putting things in train for supper; presently she returned, still looking warm and cheerful after her long walk.

"There's a beautiful view from a hill over where I've been," she told me; "yes, there's a beautiful prospect of land and sea. You wouldn't discern the hill from any distance, but 'tis the pretty situation of it that counts. I sat there a long spell, and I did wish for you. No, I didn't know a word about goin' when I set out this morning" (as if I had openly reproached her!); "I only felt one o' them travelin' fits comin' on, an' I ketched up my little basket; I didn't know but I might turn and come back time for dinner. I thought it wise to set out your luncheon for you in case I didn't. Hope you had all you wanted; yes, I hope you had enough."

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1 Isaiah 27:1: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." The Lost Tribes of Israel refers to the ten ancient tribes of Israel who disappeared after the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, enslaved, and exiled by ancient Assyria.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said I. My landlady was always peculiarly bountiful in her supplies when she left me to fare for myself, as if she made a sort of peace-offering or affectionate apology.

"You know that hill with the old house right on top, over beyond the heron swamp? You'll excuse me for explainin'," Mrs. Todd began, "but you ain't so apt to strike inland as you be to go right along shore. You know that hill; there's a path leadin' right over to it that you have to look sharp to find nowadays; it belonged to the up-country Indians when they had to make a carry to the landing here to get to the out' islands. I've heard the old folks say that there used to be a place across a ledge where they'd worn a deep track with their moccasin feet, but I never could find it. 'Tis so overgrown in some places that you keep losin' the path in the bushes and findin' it as you can; but it runs pretty straight considerin' the lay o' the land, and I keep my eye on the sun and the moss that grows one side o' the tree trunks. Some brook's been choked up and the swamp's bigger than it used to be. Yes; I did get in deep enough, one place!"

I showed the solicitude that I felt. Mrs. Todd was no longer young, and in spite of her strong, great frame and spirited behavior, I knew that certain ills were apt to seize upon her, and would end some day by leaving her lame and ailing.

"Don't you go to worryin' about me," she insisted, "settin' still's the only way the Evil One'll ever get the upper hand o' me. Keep me movin' enough, an' I'm twenty year old summer an' winter both. I don't know why 'tis, but I've never happened to mention the one I've been to see. I don't know why I never happened to speak the name of Abby Martin, for I often give her a thought, but 'tis a dreadful out-o'-the-way place where she lives, and I haven't seen her myself for three or four years. She's a real good interesting woman, and we're well acquainted; she's nigher mother's age than mine, but she's very young feeling. She made me a nice cup o' tea, and I don't know but I should have stopped all night if I could have got word to you not to worry."

Then there was a serious silence before Mrs. Todd spoke again to make a formal announcement.

"She is the Queen's Twin," and Mrs. Todd looked steadily to see how I might bear the great surprise.

"The Queen's Twin?" I repeated.

"Yes, she's come to feel a real interest in the Queen, and anybody can see how natural 'tis. They were born the very same

day,[1] and you would be astonished to see what a number o' other things have corresponded. She was speaking o' some o' the facts to me to-day, an' you'd think she'd never done nothing but read history. I see how earnest she was about it as I never did before. I've often and often heard her allude to the facts, but now she's got to be old and the hurry's over with her work, she's come to live a good deal in her thoughts, as folks often do, and I tell you 'tis a sight o' company for her. If you want to hear about Queen Victoria, why Mis' Abby Martin'll tell you everything. And the prospect from that hill I spoke of is as beautiful as anything in this world; 'tis worth while your goin' over to see her just for that."

"When can you go again?" I demanded eagerly.

"I should say to-morrow," answered Mrs. Todd; "yes, I should say to-morrow; but I expect 't would be better to take one day to rest, in between. I considered that question as I was comin' home, but I hurried so that there wa'n't much time to think. It's a dreadful long way to go with a horse; you have to go 'most as far as the old Bowden place an' turn off to the left, a master long, rough road, and then you have to turn right round as soon as you get there if you mean to get home before nine o'clock at night. But to strike across country from here, there's plenty o' time in the shortest day, and you can have a good hour or two's visit beside; 't ain't but a very few miles, and it's pretty all the way along. There used to be a few good families over there, but they've died and scattered, so now she's far from neighbors. There, she really cried, she was so glad to see anybody comin'. You'll be amused to hear her talk about the Queen, but I thought twice or three times as I set there 't was about all the company she'd got."

"Could we go day after to-morrow?" I asked eagerly.

"'T would suit me exactly," said Mrs. Todd.

II.

One can never be so certain of good New England weather as in the days when a long easterly storm has blown away the warm late-summer mists, and cooled the air so that however bright the sunshine is by day, the nights come nearer and nearer to frostiness. There was a cold freshness in the morning air when Mrs. Todd and I locked the house-door behind us; we took the key of

1 Born 24 May 1819, Queen Alexandrina Victoria ascended the British throne in 1837 and reigned until her death in 1901.

the fields[1] into our own hands that day, and put out across country as one puts out to sea. When we reached the top of the ridge behind the town it seemed as if we had anxiously passed the harbor bar and were comfortably in open sea at last.

"There, now!" proclaimed Mrs. Todd, taking a long breath, "now I do feel safe. It's just the weather that's liable to bring somebody to spend the day; I've had a feeling of Mis' Elder Caplin from North Point bein' close upon me ever since I waked up this mornin', an' I didn't want to be hampered with our present plans. She's a great hand to visit; she'll be spendin' the day somewhere from now till Thanksgivin', but there's plenty o' places at the Landin' where she goes, an' if I ain't there she'll just select another. I thought mother might be in, too, 'tis so pleasant; but I run up the road to look off this mornin' before you was awake, and there was no sign o' the boat. If they hadn't started by that time they wouldn't start, just as the tide is now; besides, I see a lot o' mackerel-men headin' Green Island way, and they'll detain William. No, we're safe now, an' if mother should be comin' in to-morrow we'll have all this to tell her. She an' Mis' Abby Martin's very old friends."

We were walking down the long pasture slopes towards the dark woods and thickets of the low ground. They stretched away northward like an unbroken wilderness; the early mists still dulled much of the color and made the uplands beyond look like a very far-off country.

"It ain't so far as it looks from here," said my companion reassuringly, "but we've got no time to spare either," and she hurried on, leading the way with a fine sort of spirit in her step; and presently we struck into the old Indian footpath, which could be plainly seen across the long-unploughed turf of the pastures, and followed it among the thick, low-growing spruces. There the ground was smooth and brown under foot, and the thin-stemmed trees held a dark and shadowy roof overhead. We walked a long way without speaking; sometimes we had to push aside the branches, and sometimes we walked in a broad aisle where the trees were larger. It was a solitary wood, birdless and beastless; there was not even a rabbit to be seen, or a crow high in air to break the silence.

"I don't believe the Queen ever saw such a lonesome trail as this," said Mrs. Todd, as if she followed the thoughts that were in

1 To run away and to free oneself from responsibilities.

my mind. Our visit to Mrs. Abby Martin seemed in some strange way to concern the high affairs of royalty. I had just been thinking of English landscapes, and of the solemn hills of Scotland with their lonely cottages and stone-walled sheepfolds, and the wandering flocks on high cloudy pastures. I had often been struck by the quick interest and familiar allusion to certain members of the royal house which one found in distant neighborhoods of New England; whether some old instincts of personal loyalty have survived all changes of time and national vicissitudes, or whether it is only that the Queen's own character and disposition have won friends for her so far away, it is impossible to tell. But to hear of a twin sister was the most surprising proof of intimacy of all, and I must confess that there was something remarkably exciting to the imagination in my morning walk. To think of being presented at Court in the usual way was for the moment quite commonplace.

III.

Mrs. Todd was swinging her basket to and fro like a schoolgirl as she walked, and at this moment it slipped from her hand and rolled lightly along the ground as if there were nothing in it. I picked it up and gave it to her, whereupon she lifted the cover and looked in with anxiety.

"'Tis only a few little things, but I don't want to lose 'em," she explained humbly. "'T was lucky you took the other basket if I was goin' to roll it round. Mis' Abby Martin complained o' lacking some pretty pink silk to finish one o' her little frames, an' I thought I'd carry her some, and I had a bunch o' gold thread that had been in a box o' mine this twenty year. I never was one to do much fancy work, but we're all liable to be swept away by fashion. And then there's a small packet o' very choice herbs that I gave a good deal of attention to; they'll smarten her up and give her the best of appetites, come spring. She was tellin' me that spring weather is very wiltin' an' tryin' to her, and she was beginnin' to dread it already. Mother's just the same way; if I could prevail on mother to take some o' these remedies in good season 't would make a world o' difference, but she gets all down hill before I have a chance to hear of it, and then William comes in to tell me, sighin' and bewailin', how feeble mother is. 'Why can't you remember 'bout them good herbs that I never let her be without?' I say to him—he does provoke me so; and then off he goes, sulky enough, down to his boat. Next thing I know, she

comes in to go to meetin',[1] wantin' to speak to everybody and feelin' like a girl. Mis' Martin's case is very much the same; but she's nobody to watch her. William's kind o' slow-moulded;[2] but there, any William's better than none when you get to be Mis' Martin's age."

"Hadn't she any children?" I asked.

"Quite a number," replied Mrs. Todd grandly, "but some are gone and the rest are married and settled. She never was a great hand to go about visitin'. I don't know but Mis' Martin might be called a little peculiar. Even her own folks has to make company of her;[3] she never slips in and lives right along with the rest as if 't was at home, even in her own children's houses. I heard one o' her sons' wives say once she'd much rather have the Queen to spend the day if she could choose between the two, but I never thought Abby was so difficult as that. I used to love to have her come; she may have been sort o' ceremonious, but very pleasant and sprightly if you had sense enough to treat her her own way. I always think she'd know just how to live with great folks, and feel easier 'long of them an' their ways. Her son's wife's a great driver[4] with farm-work, boards a great tableful o' men in hayin' time, an' feels right in her element. I don't say but she's a good woman an' smart, but sort o' rough. Anybody that's gentle-mannered an' precise like Mis' Martin would be a sort o' restraint.

"There's all sorts o' folks in the country, same 's there is in the city," concluded Mrs. Todd gravely, and I as gravely agreed. The thick woods were behind us now, and the sun was shining clear overhead, the morning mists were gone, and a faint blue haze softened the distance; as we climbed the hill where we were to see the view, it seemed like a summer day. There was an old house on the height, facing southward,—a mere forsaken shell of an old house, with empty windows that looked like blind eyes. The frost-bitten grass grew close about it like brown fur, and there was a single crooked bough of lilac holding its green leaves close by the door.

"We'll just have a good piece of bread-an'-butter now," said the commander of the expedition, "and then we'll hang up the basket on some peg inside the house out o' the way o' the sheep, and have a han'some entertainment as we're comin' back. She'll

1 A Protestant religious service, held in a church or meeting-house.

2 Mrs. Todd is suggesting that William's basic nature is slow or dull.

3 To treat her like a guest.

4 The person who is in charge or the overseer.

be all through her little dinner when we get there, Mis' Martin will; but she'll want to make us some tea, an' we must have our visit an' be startin' back pretty soon after two. I don't want to cross all that low ground again after it's begun to grow chilly. An' it looks to me as if the clouds might begin to gather late in the afternoon."

Before us lay a splendid world of sea and shore. The autumn colors already brightened the landscape; and here and there at the edge of a dark tract of pointed firs stood a row of bright swamp-maples like scarlet flowers. The blue sea and the great tide inlets were untroubled by the lightest winds.

"Poor land, this is!" sighed Mrs. Todd as we sat down to rest on the worn doorstep. "I've known three good hard-workin' families that come here full o' hope an' pride and tried to make something o' this farm, but it beat 'em all. There's one small field that's excellent for potatoes if you let half of it rest every year; but the land's always hungry. Now, you see them little peakéd-topped spruces an' fir balsams comin' up over the hill all green an' hearty; they've got it all their own way! Seems sometimes as if wild Natur' got jealous over a certain spot, and wanted to do just as she'd a mind to. You'll see here; she'll do her own ploughin' an' harrowin' with frost an' wet, an' plant just what she wants and wait for her own crops. Man can't do nothin' with it, try as he may. I tell you those little trees means business!"

I looked down the slope, and felt as if we ourselves were likely to be surrounded and overcome if we lingered too long. There was a vigor of growth, a persistence and savagery about the sturdy little trees that put weak human nature at complete defiance. One felt a sudden pity for the men and women who had been worsted after a long fight in that lonely place; one felt a sudden fear of the unconquerable, immediate forces of Nature, as in the irresistible moment of a thunderstorm.

"I can recollect the time when folks were shy o' these woods we just come through," said Mrs. Todd seriously. "The men-folks themselves never'd venture into 'em alone; if their cattle got strayed they'd collect whoever they could get, and start off all together. They said a person was liable to get bewildered in there alone, and in old times folks had been lost. I expect there was considerable fear left over from the old Indian times, and the poor days o' witchcraft; anyway, I've seen bold men act kind o' timid. Some women o' the Asa Bowden family went out one afternoon berryin' when I was a girl, and got lost and was out all night; they found 'em middle o' the mornin' next day, not half a

mile from home, scared most to death, an' sayin' they'd heard wolves and other beasts sufficient for a caravan. Poor creatur's! they'd strayed at last into a kind of low place amongst some alders, an' one of 'em was so overset she never got over it, an' went off in a sort o' slow decline. 'T was like them victims that drowns in a foot o' water; but their minds did suffer dreadful. Some folks is born afraid of the woods and all wild places, but I must say they've always been like home to me."

I glanced at the resolute, confident face of my companion. Life was very strong in her, as if some force of Nature were personified in this simple-hearted woman and gave her cousinship to the ancient deities. She might have walked the primeval fields of Sicily;[1] her strong gingham skirts might at that very moment bend the slender stalks of asphodel and be fragrant with trodden thyme,[2] instead of the brown wind-brushed grass of New England and frost-bitten goldenrod. She was a great soul, was Mrs. Todd, and I her humble follower, as we went our way to visit the Queen's Twin, leaving the bright view of the sea behind us, and descending to a lower country-side through the dry pastures and fields.

The farms all wore a look of gathering age, though the settlement was, after all, so young. The fences were already fragile, and it seemed as if the first impulse of agriculture had soon spent itself without hope of renewal. The better houses were always those that had some hold upon the riches of the sea; a house that could not harbor a fishing-boat in some neighboring inlet was far from being sure of every-day comforts. The land alone was not enough to live upon in that stony region; it belonged by right to the forest, and to the forest it fast returned. From the top of the hill where we had been sitting we had seen prosperity in the dim distance, where the land was good and the sun shone upon fat barns, and where warm-looking houses with three or four chimneys apiece stood high on their solid ridge above the bay.

As we drew nearer to Mrs. Martin's it was sad to see what poor bushy fields, what thin and empty dwelling-places had been left

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1 Many of the pastoral Idylls of the ancient Greek poet Theocritus (310-250 BCE) are set in the Sicilian countryside. This allusion corresponds to the mention of Theocritus in Chapter 12, "A Strange Sail," of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

2 Both of these plants are associated with death. Asphodel flowers were the favorite food of the Greek dead, while in the British Isles thyme is often either grown on, or thrown into, graves.

by those who had chosen this disappointing part of the northern country for their home. We crossed the last field and came into a narrow rain-washed road, and Mrs. Todd looked eager and expectant and said that we were almost at our journey's end. "I do hope Mis' Martin'll ask you into her best room where she keeps all the Queen's pictures. Yes, I think likely she will ask you; but 't ain't everybody she deems worthy to visit 'em, I can tell you!" said Mrs. Todd warningly. "She's been collectin' 'em an' cuttin' 'em out o' newspapers an' magazines time out o' mind, and if she heard of anybody sailin' for an English port she'd contrive to get a little money to 'em and ask to have the last likeness there was. She's most covered her best-room wall now; she keeps that room shut up sacred as a meetin'-house! 'I won't say but I have my favorites amongst 'em,' she told me t' other day, 'but they're all beautiful to me as they can be!' And she's made some kind o' pretty little frames for 'em all—you know there's always a new fashion o' frames comin' round; first 't was shell-work, and then 't was pine-cones, and bead-work's had its day, and now she's much concerned with perforated cardboard worked with silk. I tell you that best room's a sight to see! But you mustn't look for anything elegant," continued Mrs. Todd, after a moment's reflection. "Mis' Martin's always been in very poor, strugglin' circumstances. She had ambition for her children, though they took right after their father an' had little for themselves; she wa'n't over an' above well married, however kind she may see fit to speak. She's been patient an' hard-workin' all her life, and always high above makin' mean complaints of other folks. I expect all this business about the Queen has buoyed her over many a shoal place in life. Yes, you might say that Abby'd been a slave, but there ain't any slave but has some freedom."

IV.

Presently I saw a low gray house standing on a grassy bank close to the road. The door was at the side, facing us, and a tangle of snowberry bushes and cinnamon roses grew to the level of the window-sills. On the doorstep stood a bent-shouldered, little old woman; there was an air of welcome and of unmistakable dignity about her.

"She sees us coming," exclaimed Mrs. Todd in an excited whisper. "There, I told her I might be over this way again if the weather held good, and if I came I'd bring you. She said right off she'd take great pleasure in havin' a visit from you; I was sur-

prised, she's usually so retirin'."

Even this reassurance did not quell a faint apprehension on our part; there was something distinctly formal in the occasion, and one felt that consciousness of inadequacy which is never easy for the humblest pride to bear. On the way I had torn my dress in an unexpected encounter with a little thornbush, and I could now imagine how it felt to be going to Court and forgetting one's feathers or her Court train.

The Queen's Twin was oblivious of such trifles; she stood waiting with a calm look until we came near enough to take her kind hand. She was a beautiful old woman, with clear eyes and a lovely quietness and genuineness of manner; there was not a trace of anything pretentious about her, or high-flown, as Mrs. Todd would say comprehensively. Beauty in age is rare enough in women who have spent their lives in the hard work of a farmhouse; but autumn-like and withered as this woman may have looked, her features had kept, or rather gained, a great refinement. She led us into her old kitchen and gave us seats, and took one of the little straight-backed chairs herself and sat a short distance away, as if she were giving audience to an ambassador. It seemed as if we should all be standing; you could not help feeling that the habits of her life were more ceremonious, but that for the moment she assumed the simplicities of the occasion.

Mrs. Todd was always Mrs. Todd, too great and self-possessed a soul for any occasion to ruffle. I admired her calmness, and presently the slow current of neighborhood talk carried one easily along; we spoke of the weather and the small adventures of the way, and then, as if I were after all not a stranger, our hostess turned almost affectionately to speak to me.

"The weather will be growing dark in London now. I expect that you've been in London, dear?" she said.

"Oh, yes," I answered. "Only last year."

"It is a great many years since I was there, along in the forties," said Mrs. Martin. "'T was the only voyage I ever made; most of my neighbors have been great travelers. My brother was master of a vessel, and his wife usually sailed with him; but that year she had a young child more frail than the others, and she dreaded the care of it at sea. It happened that my brother got a chance for my husband to go as super-cargo,[1] being a good accountant, and came one day to urge him to take it; he was very ill-disposed to

1 A representative on a merchant ship in charge of the owner's cargo and its sale and purchase.

the sea, but he had met with losses, and I saw my own opportunity and persuaded them both to let me go too. In those days they didn't object to a woman's being aboard to wash and mend, the voyages were sometimes very long. And that was the way I come to see the Queen."

Mrs. Martin was looking straight in my eyes to see if I showed any genuine interest in the most interesting person in the world.

"Oh, I am very glad you saw the Queen," I hastened to say. "Mrs. Todd has told me that you and she were born the very same day."

"We were indeed, dear!" said Mrs. Martin, and she leaned back comfortably and smiled as she had not smiled before. Mrs. Todd gave a satisfied nod and glance, as if to say that things were going on as well as possible in this anxious moment.

"Yes," said Mrs. Martin again, drawing her chair a little nearer, "'t was a very remarkable thing; we were born the same day, and at exactly the same hour, after you allowed for all the difference in time. My father figured it out sea-fashion. Her Royal Majesty and I opened our eyes upon this world together; say what you may, 'tis a bond between us."

Mrs. Todd assented with an air of triumph, and untied her hat-strings and threw them back over her shoulders with a gallant air.

"And I married a man by the name of Albert, just the same as she did, and all by chance, for I didn't get the news that she had an Albert too till a fortnight afterward; news was slower coming then than it is now. My first baby was a girl, and I called her Victoria after my mate; but the next one was a boy, and my husband wanted the right to name him, and took his own name and his brother Edward's, and pretty soon I saw in the paper that the little Prince o' Wales had been christened just the same. After that I made excuse to wait till I knew what she'd named her children. I didn't want to break the chain, so I had an Alfred, and my darling Alice that I lost long before she lost hers, and there I stopped. If I'd only had a dear daughter to stay at home with me, same 's her youngest one, I should have been so thankful! But if only one of us could have a little Beatrice, I'm glad 't was the Queen; we've both seen trouble, but she's had the most care."

I asked Mrs. Martin if she lived alone all the year, and was told that she did except for a visit now and then from one of her grandchildren, "the only one that really likes to come an' stay quiet 'long o' grandma. She always says quick as she's through her schoolin' she's goin' to live with me all the time, but she's very

pretty an' has taking ways,"[1] said Mrs. Martin, looking both proud and wistful, "so I can tell nothing at all about it! Yes, I've been alone most o' the time since my Albert was taken away, and that's a great many years; he had a long time o' failing and sickness first." (Mrs. Todd's foot gave an impatient scuff on the floor.) "An' I've always lived right here. I ain't like the Queen's Majesty, for this is the only palace I've got," said the dear old thing, smiling again. "I'm glad of it too, I don't like changing about, an' our stations in life are set very different. I don't require what the Queen does, but sometimes I've thought 't was left to me to do the plain things she don't have time for. I expect she's a beautiful housekeeper, nobody couldn't have done better in her high place, and she's been as good a mother as she's been a queen."

"I guess she has, Abby," agreed Mrs. Todd instantly. "How was it you happened to get such a good look at her? I meant to ask you again when I was here t' other day."

"Our ship was layin' in the Thames, right there above Wapping.[2] We was dischargin' cargo, and under orders to clear as quick as we could for Bordeaux to take on an excellent freight o' French goods," explained Mrs. Martin eagerly. "I heard that the Queen was goin' to a great review of her army, and would drive out o' her Buckin'ham Palace about ten o'clock in the mornin', and I run aft to Albert, my husband, and brother Horace where they was standin' together by the hatchway, and told 'em they must one of 'em take me. They laughed, I was in such a hurry, and said they couldn't go; and I found they meant it and got sort of impatient when I began to talk, and I was 'most broken-hearted; 't was all the reason I had for makin' that hard voyage. Albert couldn't help often reproachin' me, for he did so resent the sea, an' I'd known how 't would be before we sailed; but I'd minded nothing all the way till then, and I just crep' back to my cabin an' begun to cry. They was disappointed about their ship's cook, an' I'd cooked for fo'c's'le an' cabin myself all the way over; 't was dreadful hard work, specially in rough weather; we'd had head winds an' a six weeks' voyage. They'd acted sort of ashamed o' me when I pled so to go ashore, an' that hurt my feelin's most of all. But Albert come below pretty soon; I'd never given way so in my life, an' he begun to act frightened, and treated me gentle

1 To have "taking ways" is synonymous with greed, or a general desire to have more than one needs or deserves.

2 Part of the Docklands area of London.

just as he did when we was goin' to be married, an' when I got over sobbin' he went on deck and saw Horace an' talked it over what they could do; they really had their duty to the vessel, and couldn't be spared that day. Horace was real good when he understood everything, and he come an' told me I'd more than worked my passage an' was goin' to do just as I liked now we was in port. He'd engaged a cook, too, that was comin' aboard that mornin', and he was goin' to send the ship's carpenter with me—a nice fellow from up Thomaston way; he'd gone to put on his ashore clothes as quick 's he could. So then I got ready, and we started off in the small boat and rowed up river. I was afraid we were too late, but the tide was setting up very strong, and we landed an' left the boat to a keeper, and I run all the way up those great streets and across a park. 'T was a great day, with sights o' folks everywhere, but 't was just as if they was nothin' but wax images to me. I kep' askin' my way an' runnin' on, with the carpenter comin' after as best he could, and just as I worked to the front o' the crowd by the palace, the gates was flung open and out she came; all prancin' horses and shinin' gold, and in a beautiful carriage there she sat; 't was a moment o' heaven to me. I saw her plain, and she looked right at me so pleasant and happy, just as if she knew there was somethin' different between us from other folks."

There was a moment when the Queen's Twin could not go on and neither of her listeners could ask a question.

"Prince Albert was sitting right beside her in the carriage," she continued. "Oh, he was a beautiful man! Yes, dear, I saw 'em both together just as I see you now, and then she was gone out o' sight in another minute, and the common crowd was all spread over the place pushin' an' cheerin'. 'T was some kind o' holiday, an' the carpenter and I got separated, an' then I found him again after I didn't think I should, an' he was all for makin' a day of it, and goin' to show me all the sights; he'd been in London before, but I didn't want nothin' else, an' we went back through the streets down to the waterside an' took the boat. I remember I mended an old coat o' my Albert's as good as I could, sittin' on the quarter-deck in the sun all that afternoon, and 't was all as if I was livin' in a lovely dream. I don't know how to explain it, but there hasn't been no friend I've felt so near to me ever since."

One could not say much—only listen. Mrs. Todd put in a discerning question now and then, and Mrs. Martin's eyes shone brighter and brighter as she talked. What a lovely gift of imagination and true affection was in this fond old heart! I looked about

the plain New England kitchen, with its wood-smoked walls and homely braided rugs on the worn floor, and all its simple furnishings. The loud-ticking clock seemed to encourage us to speak; at the other side of the room was an early newspaper portrait of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. On a shelf below were some flowers in a little glass dish, as if they were put before a shrine.

"If I could have had more to read, I should have known 'most everything about her," said Mrs. Martin wistfully. "I've made the most of what I did have, and thought it over and over till it came clear. I sometimes seem to have her all my own, as if we'd lived right together. I've often walked out into the woods alone and told her what my troubles was, and it always seemed as if she told me 't was all right, an' we must have patience. I've got her beautiful book about the Highlands;[1] 't was dear Mis' Todd here that found out about her printing it and got a copy for me, and it's been a treasure to my heart, just as if 't was written right to me. I always read it Sundays now, for my Sunday treat. Before that I used to have to imagine a good deal, but when I come to read her book, I knew what I expected was all true. We do think alike about so many things," said the Queen's Twin with affectionate certainty. "You see, there is something between us, being born just at the same time; 'tis what they call a birthright. She's had great tasks put upon her, being the Queen, an' mine has been the humble lot; but she's done the best she could, nobody can say to the contrary, and there's something between us; she's been the great lesson I've had to live by. She's been everything to me. An' when she had her Jubilee,[2] oh, how my heart was with her!"

"There, 't wouldn't play the part in her life it has in mine," said Mrs. Martin generously, in answer to something one of her listeners had said. "Sometimes I think now she's older, she might like to know about us. When I think how few old friends anybody has left at our age, I suppose it may be just the same with her as it is with me; perhaps she would like to know how we came into life together. But I've had a great advantage in seeing her, an' I can always fancy her goin' on, while she don't know nothin' yet

1 *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands* (1868), drawn from her diary, is Queen Victoria's fond remembrance of what the Scottish Highlands meant to her.

2 20 June 1887 marked Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of her accession to the throne.

about me, except she may feel my love stayin'[1] her heart sometimes an' not know just where it comes from. An' I dream about our being together out in some pretty fields, young as ever we was, and holdin' hands as we walk along. I'd like to know if she ever has that dream too. I used to have days when I made believe she did know, an' was comin' to see me," confessed the speaker shyly, with a little flush on her cheeks; "and I'd plan what I could have nice for supper, and I wasn't goin' to let anybody know she was here havin' a good rest, except I'd wish you, Almira Todd, or dear Mis' Blackett would happen in, for you'd know just how to talk with her. You see, she likes to be up in Scotland, right out in the wild country, better than she does anywhere else."

"I'd really love to take her out to see mother at Green Island," said Mrs. Todd with a sudden impulse.

"Oh, yes! I should love to have you," exclaimed Mrs. Martin, and then she began to speak in a lower tone. "One day I got thinkin' so about my dear Queen," she said, "an' livin' so in my thoughts, that I went to work an' got all ready for her, just as if she was really comin'. I never told this to a livin' soul before, but I feel you'll understand. I put my best fine sheets and blankets I spun an' wove myself on the bed, and I picked some pretty flowers and put 'em all round the house, an' I worked as hard an' happy as I could all day, and had as nice a supper ready as I could get, sort of telling myself a story all the time. She was comin' an' I was goin' to see her again, an' I kep' it up until nightfall; an' when I see the dark an' it come to me I was all alone, the dream left me, an' I sat down on the doorstep an' felt all foolish an' tired. An', if you'll believe it, I heard steps comin', an' an old cousin o' mine come wanderin' along, one I was apt to be shy of. She wasn't all there, as folks used to say, but harmless enough and a kind of poor old talking body. And I went right to meet her when I first heard her call, 'stead o' hidin' as I sometimes did, an' she come in dreadful willin', an' we sat down to supper together; 't was a supper I should have had no heart to eat alone."

"I don't believe she ever had such a splendid time in her life as she did then. I heard her tell all about it afterwards," exclaimed Mrs. Todd compassionately. "There, now I hear all this it seems just as if the Queen might have known and couldn't come herself, so she sent that poor old creatur' that was always in need!"

Mrs. Martin looked timidly at Mrs. Todd and then at me. "'T was childish o' me to go an' get supper," she confessed.

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1 Supporting.

"I guess you wa'n't the first one to do that," said Mrs. Todd. "No, I guess you wa'n't the first one who's got supper that way, Abby," and then for a moment she could say no more.

Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Martin had moved their chairs a little so that they faced each other, and I, at one side, could see them both.

"No, you never told me o' that before, Abby," said Mrs. Todd gently. "Don't it show that for folks that have any fancy in 'em, such beautiful dreams is the real part o' life? But to most folks the common things that happens outside 'em is all in all."

Mrs. Martin did not appear to understand at first, strange to say, when the secret of her heart was put into words; then a glow of pleasure and comprehension shone upon her face. "Why, I believe you're right, Almira!" she said, and turned to me.

"Wouldn't you like to look at my pictures of the Queen?" she asked, and we rose and went into the best room.

V.

The mid-day visit seemed very short; September hours are brief to match the shortening days. The great subject was dismissed for a while after our visit to the Queen's pictures, and my companions spoke much of lesser persons until we drank the cup of tea which Mrs. Todd had foreseen. I happily remembered that the Queen herself is said to like a proper cup of tea, and this at once seemed to make her Majesty kindly join so remote and reverent a company. Mrs. Martin's thin cheeks took on a pretty color like a girl's. "Somehow I always have thought of her when I made it extra good," she said. "I've got a real china cup that belonged to my grandmother, and I believe I shall call it hers now."

"Why don't you?" responded Mrs. Todd warmly, with a delightful smile.

Later they spoke of a promised visit which was to be made in the Indian summer[1] to the Landing and Green Island, but I observed that Mrs. Todd presented the little parcel of dried herbs, with full directions, for a cure-all in the spring, as if there were no real chance of their meeting again first. As we looked back from the turn of the road the Queen's Twin was still standing on the doorstep watching us away, and Mrs. Todd

1 A period of sunny, warm weather in autumn, not long before winter, and usually occurring after the first frost.

stopped, and stood still for a moment before she waved her hand again.

"There's one thing certain, dear," she said to me with great discernment; "it ain't as if we left her all alone!"

Then we set out upon our long way home over the hill, where we lingered in the afternoon sunshine, and through the dark woods across the heron-swamp.

A Dunnet Shepherdess (1899)

I.

Early one morning at Dunnet Landing, as if it were still night, I waked, suddenly startled by a spirited conversation beneath my window. It was not one of Mrs. Todd's morning soliloquies; she was not addressing her plants and flowers in words of either praise or blame. Her voice was declamatory though perfectly good-humored, while the second voice, a man's, was of lower pitch and somewhat deprecating.[1]

The sun was just above the sea, and struck straight across my room through a crack in the blind. It was a strange hour for the arrival of a guest, and still too soon for the general run of business, even in that tiny eastern haven where daybreak fisheries and early tides must often rule the day.

The man's voice suddenly declared itself to my sleepy ears. It was Mr. William Blackett's.

"Why, sister Almiry," he protested gently, "I don't need none o' your nostrums!"

"Pick me a small han'ful," she commanded. "No, no, a *small* han'ful, I said,—o' them large pennr'yal sprigs![2] I go to all the trouble an' cossetin' of 'em just so as to have you ready to meet such occasions, an' last year, you may remember, you never stopped here at all the day you went up country. An' the frost come at last an' blacked it. I never saw any herb that so objected to gardin ground; might as well try to flourish mayflowers in a common front yard. There, you can come in now, an' set and eat what breakfast you've got patience for. I've found everything I want, an' I'll mash 'em up an' be all ready to put 'em on."

I heard such a pleading note of appeal as the speakers went round the corner of the house, and my curiosity was so demanding, that I dressed in haste, and joined my friends a little later, with two unnoticed excuses of the beauty of the morning, and the early mail boat. William's breakfast had been slighted; he had taken his cup of tea and merely pushed back the rest on the kitchen table. He was now sitting in a helpless condition by the side window, with one of his sister's purple calico aprons pinned

1 Expressing disapproval.

2 Pennyroyal, a member of the mint family, is a traditional folk medicine used as an insect repellant, a digestive, a treatment for bronchial illness, and to stimulate abortions.

close about his neck. Poor William was meekly submitting to being smeared, as to his countenance, with a most pungent and unattractive lotion of pennyroyal and other green herbs which had been hastily pounded and mixed with cream in the little white stone mortar.

I had to cast two or three straightforward looks at William to reassure myself that he really looked happy and expectant in spite of his melancholy circumstances, and was not being overtaken by retribution. The brother and sister seemed to be on delightful terms with each other for once, and there was something of cheerful anticipation in their morning talk. I was reminded of Medea's anointing Jason before the great episode of the iron bulls,[1] but to-day William really could not be going up country to see a railroad for the first time. I knew this to be one of his great schemes, but he was not fitted to appear in public, or to front an observing world of strangers. As I appeared he essayed to rise, but Mrs. Todd pushed him back into the chair.

"Set where you be till it dries on," she insisted. "Land sakes, you'd think he'd get over bein' a boy some time or 'nother, gettin' along in years as he is. An' you'd think he'd seen full enough o' fish, but once a year he has to break loose like this, an' travel off way up back o' the Bowden place—far out o' my beat, 't is—an' go a trout fishin'!"

Her tone of amused scorn was so full of challenge that William changed color even under the green streaks.

"I want some change," he said, looking at me and not at her. "'T is the prettiest little shady brook you ever saw."

"If he ever fetched home more 'n a couple o'minnies,[2] 't would seem worth while," Mrs. Todd concluded, putting a last dab of the mysterious compound so perilously near her brother's mouth that William flushed again and was silent.

A little later I witnessed his escape, when Mrs. Todd had taken the foolish risk of going down cellar. There was a horse and wagon outside the garden fence, and presently we stood where we could see him driving up the hill with thoughtless speed. Mrs. Todd said nothing, but watched him affectionately out of sight.

"It serves to keep the mosquitoes off," she said, and a moment

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1 In order to obtain the Golden Fleece, Jason had to perform certain tasks, the first of which was to yoke himself to fire-breathing oxen and plough a field. Medea enabled him to do this by giving him a magic ointment that protected him from the flames.

2 Minnows.

later it occurred to my slow mind that she spoke of the pennyroyal lotion. "I don't know sometimes but William's kind of poetical," she continued, in her gentlest voice. "You'd think if anything could cure him of it, 't would be the fish business."

It was only twenty minutes past six on a summer morning, but we both sat down to rest as if the activities of the day were over. Mrs. Todd rocked gently for a time, and seemed to be lost, though not poorly, like Macbeth,[1] in her thoughts. At last she resumed relations with her actual surroundings. "I shall now put my lobsters on. They'll make us a good supper," she announced. "Then I can let the fire out for all day; give it a holiday, same 's William. You can have a little one now, nice an' hot, if you ain't got all the breakfast you want. Yes, I'll put the lobsters on. William was very thoughtful to bring 'em over; William *is* thoughtful; if he only had a spark o' ambition, there be few could match him."

This unusual concession was afforded a sympathetic listener from the depths of the kitchen closet. Mrs. Todd was getting out her old iron lobster pot, and began to speak of prosaic affairs. I hoped that I should hear something more about her brother and their island life, and sat idly by the kitchen window looking at the morning glories that shaded it, believing that some flaw of wind might set Mrs. Todd's mind on its former course. Then it occurred to me that she had spoken about our supper rather than our dinner, and I guessed that she might have some great scheme before her for the day.

When I had loitered for some time and there was no further word about William, and at last I was conscious of receiving no attention whatever, I went away. It was something of a disappointment to find that she put no hindrance in the way of my usual morning affairs, of going up to the empty little white schoolhouse on the hill where I did my task of writing. I had been almost sure of a holiday when I discovered that Mrs. Todd was likely to take one herself; we had not been far afield to gather herbs and pleasures for many days now, but a little later she had silently vanished. I found my luncheon ready on the table in the little entry, wrapped in its shining old homespun napkin, and as if by way of special consolation, there was a stone bottle of Mrs. Todd's best spruce beer, with a long piece of cod line wound round it by which it could be lowered for coolness into the deep schoolhouse well.

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1 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606), II.ii.68-9: "… be not lost / So poorly in your thoughts."

I walked away with a dull supply of writing-paper and these provisions, feeling like a reluctant child who hopes to be called back at every step. There was no relenting voice to be heard, and when I reached the schoolhouse, I found that I had left an open window and a swinging shutter the day before, and the sea wind that blew at evening had fluttered my poor sheaf of papers all about the room.

So the day did not begin very well, and I began to recognize that it was one of the days when nothing could be done without company. The truth was that my heart had gone trouting with William, but it would have been too selfish to say a word even to one's self about spoiling his day. If there is one way above another of getting so close to nature that one simply is a piece of nature, following a primeval instinct with perfect self-forgetfulness and forgetting everything except the dreamy consciousness of pleasant freedom, it is to take the course of a shady trout brook. The dark pools and the sunny shallows beckon one on; the wedge of sky between the trees on either bank, the speaking, companioning noise of the water, the amazing importance of what one is doing, and the constant sense of life and beauty make a strange transformation of the quick hours. I had a sudden memory of all this, and another, and another. I could not get myself free from "fishing and wishing."

At that moment I heard the unusual sound of wheels, and I looked past the high-growing thicket of wild-roses and straggling sumach[1] to see the white nose and meagre shape of the Caplin horse; then I saw William sitting in the open wagon, with a small expectant smile upon his face.

"I've got two lines," he said. "I was quite a piece up the road. I thought perhaps 't was so you'd feel like going."

There was enough excitement for most occasions in hearing William speak three sentences at once. Words seemed but vain to me at that bright moment. I stepped back from the schoolhouse window with a beating heart. The spruce-beer bottle was not yet in the well, and with that and my luncheon, and Pleasure at the helm,[2] I went out into the happy world. The land breeze was blowing, and, as we turned away, I saw a flutter of white go past the window as I left the schoolhouse and my morning's work to their neglected fate.

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1 Also spelled sumac, a flowering plant whose North American species are sometimes used to make a beverage known as "Indian lemonade."

2 British Romantic painter William Etty (1787-1849) produced a painting entitled *Youth on the Prow, and Pleasure at the Helm* (1830-32).

II.

One seldom gave way to a cruel impulse to look at an ancient seafaring William, but one felt as if he were a growing boy; I only hope that he felt much the same about me. He did not wear the fishing clothes that belonged to his sea-going life, but a strangely shaped old suit of tea-colored linen garments that might have been brought home years ago from Canton or Bombay.[1] William had a peculiar way of giving silent assent when one spoke, but of answering your unspoken thoughts as if they reached him better than words. "I find them very easy," he said, frankly referring to the clothes. "Father had them in his old sea-chest."

The antique fashion, a quaint touch of foreign grace and even imagination about the cut were very pleasing; if ever Mr. William Blackett had faintly resembled an old beau, it was upon that day. He now appeared to feel as if everything had been explained between us, as if everything were quite understood; and we drove for some distance without finding it necessary to speak again about anything. At last, when it must have been a little past nine o'clock, he stopped the horse beside a small farmhouse, and nodded when I asked if I should get down from the wagon. "You can steer about northeast right across the pasture," he said, looking from under the eaves of his hat with an expectant smile. "I always leave the team here."

I helped to unfasten the harness, and William led the horse away to the barn. It was a poor-looking little place, and a forlorn woman looked at us through the window before she appeared at the door. I told her that Mr. Blackett and I came up from the Landing to go fishing. "He keeps a-comin', don't he?" she answered, with a funny little laugh, to which I was at a loss to find answer. When he joined us, I could not see that he took notice of her presence in any way, except to take an armful of dried salt fish from a corded stack in the back of the wagon which had been carefully covered with a piece of old sail. We had left a wake of their pungent flavor behind us all the way. I wondered what was going to become of the rest of them and some fresh lobsters which were also disclosed to view, but he laid the present gift on the doorstep without a word, and a few minutes later, when I looked back as we crossed the pasture, the fish were being carried into the house.

I could not see any signs of a trout brook until I came close

1 Canton, China; Bombay, India.

upon it in the bushy pasture, and presently we struck into the low woods of straggling spruce and fir mixed into a tangle of swamp maples and alders which stretched away on either hand up and down stream. We found an open place in the pasture where some taller trees seemed to have been overlooked rather than spared. The sun was bright and hot by this time, and I sat down in the shade while William produced his lines and cut and trimmed us each a slender rod. I wondered where Mrs. Todd was spending the morning, and if later she would think that pirates had landed and captured me from the schoolhouse.

III.

The brook was giving that live, persistent call to a listener that trout brooks always make; it ran with a free, swift current even here, where it crossed an apparently level piece of land. I saw two unpromising, quick barbel[1] chase each other upstream from bank to bank as we solemnly arranged our hooks and sinkers. I felt that William's glances changed from anxiety to relief when he found that I was used to such gear; perhaps he felt that we must stay together if I could not bait my own hook, but we parted happily, full of a pleasing sense of companionship.

William had pointed me up the brook, but I chose to go down, which was only fair because it was his day, though one likes as well to follow and see where a brook goes as to find one's way to the places it comes from, and its tiny springs and headwaters, and in this case trout were not to be considered. William's only real anxiety was lest I might suffer from mosquitoes. His own complexion was still strangely impaired by its defenses, but I kept forgetting it, and looking to see if we were treading fresh pennyroyal underfoot, so efficient was Mrs. Todd's remedy. I was conscious, after we parted, and I turned to see if he were already fishing, and saw him wave his hand gallantly as he went away, that our friendship had made a great gain.

The moment that I began to fish the brook, I had a sense of its emptiness; when my bait first touched the water and went lightly down the quick stream, I knew that there was nothing to lie in wait for it. It is the same certainty that comes when one knocks at the door of an empty house, a lack of answering consciousness and of possible response; it is quite different if there is any life within. But it was a lovely brook, and I went a long way through

1 A group of large, carp-like, freshwater fish.

woods and breezy open pastures, and found a forsaken house and overgrown farm, and laid up many pleasures for future joy and remembrance. At the end of the morning I came back to our meeting-place hungry and without any fish. William was already waiting, and we did not mention the matter of trout. We ate our luncheons with good appetites, and William brought our two stone bottles of spruce beer from the deep place in the brook where he had left them to cool. Then we sat awhile longer in peace and quietness on the green banks.

As for William, he looked more boyish than ever, and kept a more remote and juvenile sort of silence. Once I wondered how he had come to be so curiously wrinkled, forgetting, absent-mindedly, to recognize the effects of time. He did not expect any one else to keep up a vain show of conversation, and so I was silent as well as he. I glanced at him now and then, but I watched the leaves tossing against the sky and the red cattle moving in the pasture. "I don't know 's we need head for home. It's early yet," he said at last, and I was as startled as if one of the gray firs had spoken.

"I guess I'll go up-along and ask after Thankful Hight's folks," he continued. "Mother'd like to get word;" and I nodded a pleased assent.

IV.

William led the way across the pasture, and I followed with a deep sense of pleased anticipation. I do not believe that my companion had expected me to make any objection, but I knew that he was gratified by the easy way that his plans for the day were being seconded. He gave a look at the sky to see if there were any portents, but the sky was frankly blue; even the doubtful morning haze had disappeared.

We went northward along a rough, clayey road, across a bare-looking, sunburnt country full of tiresome long slopes where the sun was hot and bright, and I could not help observing the forlorn look of the farms. There was a great deal of pasture, but it looked deserted, and I wondered afresh why the people did not raise more sheep when that seemed the only possible use to make of their land. I said so to Mr. Blackett, who gave me a look of pleased surprise.

"That's what She always maintains," he said eagerly. "She's right about it, too; well, you'll see!" I was glad to find myself approved, but I had not the least idea whom he meant, and waited until he felt like speaking again.

A few minutes later we drove down a steep hill and entered a large tract of dark spruce woods. It was delightful to be sheltered from the afternoon sun, and when we had gone some distance in the shade, to my great pleasure William turned the horse's head toward some bars, which he let down, and I drove through into one of those narrow, still, sweet-scented by-ways which seem to be paths rather than roads. Often we had to put aside the heavy drooping branches which barred the way, and once, when a sharp twig struck William in the face, he announced with such spirit that somebody ought to go through there with an axe, that I felt unexpectedly guilty. So far as I now remember, this was William's only remark all the way through the woods to Thankful Hight's folks, but from time to time he pointed or nodded at something which I might have missed: a sleepy little owl snuggled into the bend of a branch, or a tall stalk of cardinal flowers where the sunlight came down at the edge of a small, bright piece of marsh. Many times, being used to the company of Mrs. Todd and other friends who were in the habit of talking, I came near making an idle remark to William, but I was for the most part happily preserved; to be with him only for a short time was to live on a different level, where thoughts served best because they were thoughts in common; the primary effect upon our minds of the simple things and beauties that we saw. Once when I caught sight of a lovely gay pigeon-woodpecker[1] eyeing us curiously from a dead branch, and instinctively turned toward William, he gave an indulgent, comprehending nod which silenced me all the rest of the way. The wood-road was not a place for common noisy conversation; one would interrupt the birds and all the still little beasts that belonged there. But it was mortifying to find how strong the habit of idle speech may become in one's self. One need not always be saying something in this noisy world. I grew conscious of the difference between William's usual fashion of life and mine; for him there were long days of silence in a sea-going boat, and I could believe that he and his mother usually spoke very little because they so perfectly understood each other. There was something peculiarly unresponding about their quiet island in the sea, solidly fixed into the still foundations of the world, against whose rocky shores the sea beats and calls and is unanswered.

We were quite half an hour going through the woods; the horse's feet made no sound on the brown, soft track under the

1 The Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker, also called the yellow hammer, a medium-sized member of the woodpecker family.

dark evergreens. I thought that we should come out at last into more pastures, but there was no half-wooded strip of land at the end; the high woods grew squarely against an old stone wall and a sunshiny open field, and we came out suddenly into broad daylight that startled us and even startled the horse, who might have been napping as he walked, like an old soldier. The field sloped up to a low unpainted house that faced the east. Behind it were long, frost-whitened ledges that made the hill, with strips of green turf and bushes between. It was the wildest, most Titanic[1] sort of pasture country up there; there was a sort of daring in putting a frail wooden house before it, though it might have the homely field and honest woods to front against. You thought of the elements and even of possible volcanoes as you looked up the stony heights. Suddenly I saw that a region of what I had thought gray stones was slowly moving, as if the sun was making my eyesight unsteady.

"There's the sheep!" exclaimed William, pointing eagerly. "You see the sheep?" and sure enough, it was a great company of woolly backs, which seemed to have taken a mysterious protective resemblance to the ledges themselves. I could discover but little chance for pasturage on that high sunburnt ridge, but the sheep were moving steadily in a satisfied way as they fed along the slopes and hollows.

"I never have seen half so many sheep as these, all summer long!" I cried with admiration.

"There ain't so many," answered William soberly. "It's a great sight. They do so well because they're shepherded, but you can't beat sense into some folks."

"You mean that somebody stays and watches them?" I asked.

"She observed years ago in her readin' that they don't turn out their flocks without protection anywhere but in the State o' Maine," returned William. "First thing that put it into her mind was a little old book mother's got; she read it one time when she come out to the Island. They call it the 'Shepherd o' Salisbury Plain.'[2] 'T wasn't the purpose o' the book to most, but when she read it, 'There, Mis' Blackett!' she said, 'that's where we've all lacked sense; our Bibles ought to have taught us that what sheep need is a shepherd.'[3] You see most folks about here gave up

1 The Titans were a race of gigantic deities in Greek mythology.

2 A religious tract authored by British writer Hannah More (1745-1833) in 1795.

3 A common Biblical motif; see Psalm 23 and John 10:8-17.

sheep-raisin' years ago 'count o' the dogs. So she gave up school-teachin' and went out to tend her flock, and has shepherded ever since, an' done well."

For William, this approached an oration. He spoke with enthusiasm, and I shared the triumph of the moment. "There she is now!" he exclaimed, in a different tone, as the tall figure of a woman came following the flock and stood still on the ridge, looking toward us as if her eyes had been quick to see a strange object in the familiar emptiness of the field. William stood up in the wagon, and I thought he was going to call or wave his hand to her, but he sat down again more clumsily than if the wagon had made the familiar motion of a boat, and we drove on toward the house.

It was a most solitary place to live,—a place where one might think that a life could hide itself. The thick woods were between the farm and the main road, and as one looked up and down the country, there was no other house in sight.

"Potatoes look well," announced William. "The old folks used to say that there wa'n't no better land outdoors than the Hight field."

I found myself possessed of a surprising interest in the shepherdess, who stood far away in the hill pasture with her great flock, like a figure of Millet's,[1] high against the sky.

V.

Everything about the old farmhouse was clean and orderly, as if the green dooryard were not only swept, but dusted. I saw a flock of turkeys stepping off carefully at a distance, but there was not the usual untidy flock of hens about the place to make everything look in disarray. William helped me out of the wagon as carefully as if I had been his mother, and nodded toward the open door with a reassuring look at me; but I waited until he had tied the horse and could lead the way, himself. He took off his hat just as we were going in, and stopped for a moment to smooth his thin gray hair with his hand, by which I saw that we had an affair of some ceremony. We entered an old-fashioned country kitchen, the floor scrubbed into unevenness, and the doors well polished by the touch of hands. In a large chair facing the window there

1 French artist Jean-François Millet (1814-75) painted peasants in rural settings. Two of his paintings featuring shepherds are *The Shepherdess Guarding Her Flock* (1862-64) and *Falling Leaves* (1866-67).

sat a masterful-looking old woman with the features of a warlike Roman emperor, emphasized by a bonnet-like black cap with a band of green ribbon. Her sceptre was a palmleaf fan.

William crossed the room toward her, and bent his head close to her ear.

"Feelin' pretty well to-day, Mis' Hight?" he asked, with all the voice his narrow chest could muster.

"No, I ain't, William. Here I have to set," she answered coldly, but she gave an inquiring glance over his shoulder at me.

"This is the young lady who is stopping with Almiry this summer," he explained, and I approached as if to give the countersign. She offered her left hand with considerable dignity, but her expression never seemed to change for the better. A moment later she said that she was pleased to meet me, and I felt as if the worst were over. William must have felt some apprehension, while I was only ignorant, as we had come across the field. Our hostess was more than disapproving, she was forbidding; but I was not long in suspecting that she felt the natural resentment of a strong energy that has been defeated by illness and made the spoil of captivity.

"Mother well as usual since you was up last year?" and William replied by a series of cheerful nods. The mention of dear Mrs. Blackett was a help to any conversation.

"Been fishin', ashore," he explained, in a somewhat conciliatory voice. "Thought you'd like a few for winter," which explained at once the generous freight we had brought in the back of the wagon. I could see that the offering was no surprise, and that Mrs. Hight was interested.

"Well, I expect they're good as the last," she said, but did not even approach a smile. She kept a straight, discerning eye upon me.

"Give the lady a cheer," she admonished William, who hastened to place close by her side one of the straight-backed chairs that stood against the kitchen wall. Then he lingered for a moment like a timid boy. I could see that he wore a look of resolve, but he did not ask the permission for which he evidently waited.

"You can go search for Esther," she said, at the end of a long pause that became anxious for both her guests. "Esther'd like to see her;" and William in his pale nankeens[1] disappeared with one light step and was off.

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1 Trousers made of a durable yellow cotton cloth.

VI.

"Don't speak too loud, it jars a person's head," directed Mrs. Hight plainly. "Clear an' distinct is what reaches me best. Any news to the Landin'?"

I was happily furnished with the particulars of a sudden death, and an engagement of marriage between a Caplin, a seafaring widower home from his voyage, and one of the younger Harrises; and now Mrs. Hight really smiled and settled herself in her chair. We exhausted one subject completely before we turned to the other. One of the returning turkeys took an unwarrantable liberty, and, mounting the doorstep, came in and walked about the kitchen without being observed by its strict owner; and the tin dipper slipped off its nail behind us and made an astonishing noise, and jar enough to reach Mrs. Hight's inner ear and make her turn her head to look at it; but we talked straight on. We came at last to understand each other upon such terms of friendship that she unbent her majestic port and complained to me as any poor old woman might of the hardships of her illness. She had already fixed various dates upon the sad certainty of the year when she had the shock, which had left her perfectly helpless except for a clumsy left hand which fanned and gestured, and settled and resettled the folds of her dress, but could do no comfortable time-shortening work.

"Yes 'm, you can feel sure I use it what I can," she said severely. "'T was a long spell before I could let Esther go forth in the mornin' till she'd got me up an' dressed me, but now she leaves things ready overnight and I get 'em as I want 'em with my light pair o' tongs, and I feel very able about helpin' myself to what I once did. Then when Esther returns, all she has to do is to push me out here into the kitchen. Some parts o' the year Esther stays out all night, them moonlight nights when the dogs are apt to be after the sheep, but she don't use herself as hard as she once had to. She's well able to hire somebody, Esther is, but there, you can't find no hired man that wants to git up before five o'clock nowadays; 't ain't as 't was in my time. They're liable to fall asleep, too, and them moonlight nights she's so anxious she can't sleep, and out she goes. There's a kind of a fold, she calls it, up there in a sheltered spot, and she sleeps up in a little shed she's got,—built it herself for lambin' time and when the poor foolish creatur's gets hurt or anything. I've never seen it, but she says it's in a lovely spot and always pleasant in any weather. You see off, other side of the ridge, to the south'ard, where there's houses. I used to think some time I'd get up to see it again, and all them spots she lives in, but

I sha'n't now. I'm beginnin' to go back; an' 't ain't surprisin'. I've kind of got used to disappointments," and the poor soul drew a deep sigh.

VII.

It was long before we noticed the lapse of time; I not only told every circumstance known to me of recent events among the households of Mrs. Todd's neighborhood at the shore, but Mrs. Hight became more and more communicative on her part, and went carefully into the genealogical descent and personal experience of many acquaintances, until between us we had pretty nearly circumnavigated the globe and reached Dunnet Landing from an opposite direction to that in which we had started. It was long before my own interest began to flag; there was a flavor of the best sort in her definite and descriptive fashion of speech. It may be only a fancy of my own that in the sound and value of many words, with their lengthened vowels and doubled cadences, there is some faint survival on the Maine coast of the sound of English speech of Chaucer's time.[1]

At last Mrs. Thankful Hight gave a suspicious look through the window.

"Where do you suppose they be?" she asked me. "Esther must ha' been off to the far edge o' everything. I doubt William ain't been able to find her; can't he hear their bells? His hearin' all right?"

William had heard some herons that morning which were beyond the reach of my own ears, and almost beyond eyesight in the upper skies, and I told her so. I was luckily preserved by some unconscious instinct from saying that we had seen the shepherdess so near as we crossed the field. Unless she had fled faster than Atalanta,[2] William must have been but a few minutes in reaching her immediate neighborhood. I now discovered with a quick leap of amusement and delight in my heart that I had fallen upon a serious chapter of romance. The old woman looked suspiciously at me, and I made a dash to cover with a new piece of information; but she listened with lofty indifference, and soon interrupted my eager statements.

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1 Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*.

2 A character from Greek mythology who was raised by a bear and brought up to be a hunter. She made a pact with her father that she would marry the man who could beat her in a foot race.

"Ain't William been gone some considerable time?" she demanded, and then in a milder tone: "The time has re'lly flown; I do enjoy havin' company. I set here alone a sight o' long days. Sheep is dreadful fools; I expect they heard a strange step, and set right off through bush an' brier, spite of all she could do. But William might have the sense to return, 'stead o' searchin' about. I want to inquire of him about his mother. What was you goin' to say? I guess you'll have time to relate it."

My powers of entertainment were on the ebb, but I doubled my diligence and we went on for another half-hour at least with banners flying, but still William did not reappear. Mrs. Hight frankly began to show fatigue.

"Somethin' 's happened, an' he's stopped to help her," groaned the old lady, in the middle of what I had found to tell her about a rumor of disaffection with the minister of a town I merely knew by name in the weekly newspaper to which Mrs. Todd subscribed. "You step to the door, dear, an' look if you can't see 'em." I promptly stepped, and once outside the house I looked anxiously in the direction which William had taken.

To my astonishment I saw all the sheep so near that I wonder we had not been aware in the house of every bleat and tinkle. And there, within a stone's-throw, on the first long gray ledge that showed above the juniper, were William and the shepherdess engaged in pleasant conversation. At first I was provoked and then amused, and a thrill of sympathy warmed my whole heart. They had seen me and risen as if by magic; I had a sense of being the messenger of Fate. One could almost hear their sighs of regret as I appeared; they must have passed a lovely afternoon. I hurried into the house with the reassuring news that they were not only in sight but perfectly safe, with all the sheep.

VIII.

Mrs. Hight, like myself, was spent with conversation, and had ceased even the one activity of fanning herself. I brought a desired drink of water, and happily remembered some fruit that was left from my luncheon. She revived with splendid vigor, and told me the simple history of her later years since she had been smitten in the prime of her life by the stroke of paralysis, and her husband had died and left her alone with Esther and a mortgage on their farm. There was only one field of good land, but they owned a great region of sheep pasture and a little woodland. Esther had always been laughed at for her belief in sheep-raising

when one by one their neighbors were giving up their flocks, and when everything had come to the point of despair she had raised all the money and bought all the sheep she could, insisting that Maine lambs were as good as any, and that there was a straight path by sea to Boston market. And by tending her flock herself she had managed to succeed; she had made money enough to pay off the mortgage five years ago, and now what they did not spend was safe in the bank. "It has been stubborn work, day and night, summer and winter, an' now she's beginnin' to get along in years," said the old mother sadly. "She's tended me 'long o' the sheep, an' she's been a good girl right along, but she ought to have been a teacher;" and Mrs. Hight sighed heavily and plied the fan again.

We heard voices, and William and Esther entered; they did not know that it was so late in the afternoon. William looked almost bold, and oddly like a happy young man rather than an ancient boy. As for Esther, she might have been Jeanne d'Arc[1] returned to her sheep, touched with age and gray with the ashes of a great remembrance. She wore the simple look of sainthood and unfeigned devotion. My heart was moved by the sight of her plain sweet face, weather-worn and gentle in its looks, her thin figure in its close dress, and the strong hand that clasped a shepherd's staff, and I could only hold William in new reverence; this silent farmer-fisherman who knew, and he alone, the noble and patient heart that beat within her breast. I am not sure that they acknowledged even to themselves that they had always been lovers; they could not consent to anything so definite or pronounced; but they were happy in being together in the world. Esther was untouched by the fret and fury of life; she had lived in sunshine and rain among her silly sheep, and been refined instead of coarsened, while her touching patience with a ramping[2] old mother, stung by the sense of defeat and mourning her lost activities, had given back a lovely self-possession, and habit of sweet temper. I had seen enough of old Mrs. Hight to know that nothing a sheep might do could vex a person who was used to the uncertainties and severities of her companionship.

1 Joan of Arc (1412-31), saint and national heroine of France, in her youth had tended sheep.

2 To behave in a threatening or rageful way.

IX.

Mrs. Hight told her daughter at once that she had enjoyed a beautiful call, and got a great many new things to think of. This was said so frankly in my hearing that it gave a consciousness of high reward, and I was indeed recompensed by the grateful look in Esther's eyes. We did not speak much together, but we understood each other. For the poor old woman did not read, and could not sew or knit with her helpless hand, and they were far from any neighbors, while her spirit was as eager in age as in youth, and expected even more from a disappointing world. She had lived to see the mortgage paid and money in the bank, and Esther's success acknowledged on every hand, and there were still a few pleasures left in life. William had his mother, and Esther had hers, and they had not seen each other for a year, though Mrs. Hight had spoken of a year's making no change in William even at his age. She must have been in the far eighties herself, but of a noble courage and persistence in the world she ruled from her stiff-backed rocking-chair.

William unloaded his gift of dried fish, each one chosen with perfect care, and Esther stood by, watching him, and then she walked across the field with us beside the wagon. I believed that I was the only one who knew their happy secret, and she blushed a little as we said good-by.

"I hope you ain't goin' to feel too tired, mother's so deaf; no, I hope you won't be tired," she said kindly, speaking as if she well knew what tiredness was. We could hear the neglected sheep bleating on the hill in the next moment's silence. Then she smiled at me, a smile of noble patience, of uncomprehended sacrifice, which I can never forget. There was all the remembrance of disappointed hopes, the hardships of winter, the loneliness of single-handedness in her look, but I understood, and I love to remember her worn face and her young blue eyes.

"Good-by, William," she said gently, and William said good-by, and gave her a quick glance, but he did not turn to look back, though I did, and waved my hand as she was putting up the bars behind us. Nor did he speak again until we had passed through the dark woods and were on our way homeward by the main road. The grave yearly visit had been changed from a hope into a happy memory.

"You can see the sea from the top of her pasture hill," said William at last.

"Can you?" I asked, with surprise.

"Yes, it's very high land; the ledges up there show very plain in clear weather from the top of our island, and there's a high upstandin' tree that makes a landmark for the fishin' grounds." And William gave a happy sigh.

When we had nearly reached the Landing, my companion looked over into the back of the wagon and saw that the piece of sailcloth was safe, with which he had covered the dried fish. "I wish we had got some trout," he said wistfully. "They always appease Almiry, and make her feel 't was worth while to go."

I stole a glance at William Blackett. We had not seen a solitary mosquito, but there was a dark stripe across his mild face, which might have been an old scar won long ago in battle.

The Foreigner (1900)

I.

One evening, at the end of August, in Dunnet Landing, I heard Mrs. Todd's firm footstep crossing the small front entry outside my door, and her conventional cough which served as a herald's trumpet, or a plain New England knock, in the harmony of our fellowship.

"Oh, please come in!" I cried, for it had been so still in the house that I supposed my friend and hostess had gone to see one of her neighbors. The first cold northeasterly storm of the season was blowing hard outside. Now and then there was a dash of great raindrops and a flick of wet lilac leaves against the window, but I could hear that the sea was already stirred to its dark depths, and the great rollers were coming in heavily against the shore. One might well believe that Summer was coming to a sad end that night, in the darkness and rain and sudden access of autumnal cold. It seemed as if there must be danger offshore among the outer islands.

"Oh, there!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd, as she entered. "I know nothing ain't ever happened out to Green Island since the world began, but I always do worry about mother in these great gales. You know those tidal waves occur sometimes down to the West Indies, and I get dwellin' on 'em so I can't set still in my chair, nor knit a common row to a stocking. William might get mooning, out in his small bo't, and not observe how the sea was making, an' meet with some accident. Yes, I thought I'd come in and set with you if you wa'n't busy. No, I never feel any concern about 'em in winter 'cause then they're prepared, and all ashore and everything snug. William ought to keep help, as I tell him; yes, he ought to keep help."

I hastened to reassure my anxious guest by saying that Elijah Tilley had told me in the afternoon, when I came along the shore past the fish houses, that Johnny Bowden and the Captain were out at Green Island; he had seen them beating up the bay, and thought they must have put into Burnt Island cove, but one of the lobstermen brought word later that he saw them hauling out at Green Island as he came by, and Captain Bowden pointed ashore and shook his head to say that he did not mean to try to get in. "The old Miranda just managed it, but she will have to stay at home a day or two and put new patches in her sail," I ended, not without pride in so much circumstantial evidence.

Mrs. Todd was alert in a moment. "Then they'll all have a very pleasant evening," she assured me, apparently dismissing all fears of tidal waves and other sea-going disasters. "I was urging Alick Bowden to go ashore some day and see mother before cold weather. He's her own nephew; she sets a great deal by him. And Johnny's a great chum o' William's; don't you know the first day we had Johnny out 'long of us, he took an' give William his money to keep for him that he'd been a-savin', and William showed it to me an' was so affected, I thought he was goin' to shed tears? 'Twas a dollar an' eighty cents; yes, they'll have a beautiful evenin' all together, and like 's not the sea'll be flat as a doorstep come morning."

I had drawn a large wooden rocking-chair before the fire, and Mrs. Todd was sitting there jogging herself a little, knitting fast, and wonderfully placid of countenance. There came a fresh gust of wind and rain, and we could feel the small wooden house rock and hear it creak as if it were a ship at sea.

"Lord, hear the great breakers!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd. "How they pound!—there, there! I always run of an idea that the sea knows anger these nights and gets full o' fight. I can hear the rote 'o them[1] old black ledges way down the thoroughfare. Calls up all those stormy verses in the Book o' Psalms;[2] David he knew how old sea-goin' folks have to quake at the heart."

I thought as I had never thought before of such anxieties. The families of sailors and coastwise adventurers by sea must always be worrying about somebody, this side of the world or the other. There was hardly one of Mrs. Todd's elder acquaintances, men or women, who had not at some time or other made a sea voyage, and there was often no news until the voyagers themselves came back to bring it.

"There's a roaring high overhead, and a roaring in the deep sea," said Mrs. Todd solemnly, "and they battle together nights like this. No, I couldn't sleep; some women folks always goes right to bed an' to sleep, so 's to forget, but 'taint my way. Well, it's a blessin' we don't all feel alike; there's hardly any of our folks at sea to worry about, nowadays, but I can't help my feelin's, an' I got thinking of mother all alone, if William had happened to be out lobsterin' and couldn't make the cove gettin' back."

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1 The sound of surf breaking on the shore.

2 See Psalms 18, 28, and 55:8: "I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest," and Psalms 107:25: "For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof."

"They will have a pleasant evening," I repeated. "Captain Bowden is the best of good company."

"Mother'll make him some pancakes for his supper, like 's not," said Mrs. Todd, clicking her knitting needles and giving a pull at her yarn. Just then the old cat pushed open the unlatched door and came straight toward her mistress's lap. She was regarded severely as she stepped about and turned on the broad expanse, and then made herself into a round cushion of fur, but was not openly admonished. There was another great blast of wind overhead, and a puff of smoke came down the chimney.

"This makes me think o' the night Mis' Cap'n Tolland died," said Mrs. Todd, half to herself. "Folks used to say these gales only blew when somebody's a-dyin', or the devil was a-comin' for his own, but the worst man I ever knew died a real pretty mornin' in June."

"You have never told me any ghost stories," said I; and such was the gloomy weather and the influence of the night that I was instantly filled with reluctance to have this suggestion followed. I had not chosen the best of moments; just before I spoke we had begun to feel as cheerful as possible. Mrs. Todd glanced doubtfully at the cat and then at me, with a strange absent look, and I was really afraid that she was going to tell me something that would haunt my thoughts on every dark stormy night as long as I lived.

"Never mind now; tell me to-morrow by daylight, Mrs. Todd," I hastened to say, but she still looked at me full of doubt and deliberation.

"Ghost stories!" she answered. "Yes, I don't know but I've heard a plenty of 'em first an' last. I was just sayin' to myself that this is like the night Mis' Cap'n Tolland died. 'Twas the great line storm[1] in September all of thirty, or maybe forty, year ago. I ain't one that keeps much account o' time."

"Tolland? That's a name I have never heard in Dunnet," I said.

"Then you haven't looked well about the old part o' the buryin' ground, no'theast corner," replied Mrs. Todd. "All their women folks lies there; the sea's got most o' the men. They were a known family o' shipmasters in early times. Mother had a mate, Ellen Tolland, that she mourns to this day; died right in her bloom with quick consumption, but the rest o' that family was all boys but one, and older than she, an' they lived hard seafarin' lives an' all died hard. They were called very smart seamen. I've

1 A violent storm of rain and wind that takes place during the equinoxes.

heard that when the youngest went into one o' the old shippin' houses in Boston, the head o' the firm called out to him: 'Did you say Tolland from Dunnet? That's recommendation enough for any vessel!' There was some o' them old shipmasters as tough as iron, an' they had the name o' usin' their crews very severe, but there wa'n't a man that wouldn't rather sign with 'em an' take his chances, than with the slack ones that didn't know how to meet accidents."

II.

There was so long a pause, and Mrs. Todd still looked so absent-minded, that I was afraid she and the cat were growing drowsy together before the fire, and I should have no reminiscences at all. The wind struck the house again, so that we both started in our chairs and Mrs. Todd gave a curious, startled look at me. The cat lifted her head and listened too, in the silence that followed, while after the wind sank we were more conscious than ever of the awful roar of the sea. The house jarred now and then, in a strange, disturbing way.

"Yes, they'll have a beautiful evening out to the island," said Mrs. Todd again; but she did not say it gayly. I had not seen her before in her weaker moments.

"Who was Mrs. Captain Tolland?" I asked eagerly, to change the current of our thoughts.

"I never knew her maiden name; if I ever heard it, I've gone an' forgot; 'twould mean nothing to me," answered Mrs. Todd.

"She was a foreigner, an' he met with her out in the Island o' Jamaica. They said she'd been left a widow with property. Land knows what become of it; she was French born, an' her first husband was a Portugee, or somethin'."

I kept silence now, a poor and insufficient question being worse than none.

"Cap'n John Tolland was the least smartest of any of 'em, but he was full smart enough, an' commanded a good brig at the time, in the sugar trade; he'd taken out a cargo o' pine lumber to the islands from somewheres up the river, an' had been headin' for home in the port o' Kingston, an' had gone ashore that afternoon for his papers, an' remained afterwards 'long of three friends o' his, all shipmasters. They was havin' their suppers together in a tavern; 'twas late in the evenin' an' they was more lively than usual, an' felt boyish; and over opposite was another house full o' company, real bright and pleasant lookin', with a lot o' lights, an' they heard

somebody singin' very pretty to a guitar. They wa'n't in no go-to-meetin' condition, an' one of 'em, he slapped the table an' said, 'Le' 's go over 'n' hear that lady sing!' an' over they all went, good honest sailors, but three sheets in the wind,[1] and stepped in as if they was invited, an' made their bows inside the door, an' asked if they could hear the music; they were all respectable well-dressed men. They saw the woman that had the guitar, an' there was a company a-listenin', regular highbinders[2] all of 'em; an' there was a long table all spread out with big candlesticks like little trees o' light, and a sight o' glass an' silverware; an' part o' the men was young officers in uniform, an' the colored folks was steppin' round servin' 'em, an' they had the lady singin'. 'Twas a wasteful scene, an' a loud talkin' company, an' though they was three sheets in the wind themselves there wa'n't one o' them cap'ns but had sense to perceive it. The others had pushed back their chairs, an' their decanters an' glasses was standin' thick about, an' they was teasin' the one that was singin' as if they'd just got her in to amuse 'em. But they quieted down; one o' the young officers had beautiful manners, an' invited the four cap'ns to join 'em, very polite; 'twas a kind of public house, and after they'd all heard another song, he come to consult with 'em whether they wouldn't git up and dance a hornpipe or somethin' to the lady's music.

"They was all elderly men an' shipmasters, and owned property; two of 'em was church members in good standin'," continued Mrs. Todd loftily, "an' they wouldn't lend theirselves to no such kick-shows as that, an' spite o' bein' three sheets in the wind, as I have once observed; they waved aside the tumblers of wine the young officer was pourin' out for 'em so freehanded, and said they should rather be excused. An' when they all rose, still very dignified, as I've been well informed, and made their partin' bows and was goin' out, them young sports got round 'em an' tried to prevent 'em, and they had to push an' strive considerable, but out they come. There was this Cap'n Tolland and two Cap'n Bowdens, and the fourth was my own father." (Mrs. Todd spoke slowly, as if to impress the value of her authority.) "Two of them was very religious, upright men, but they would have their night off sometimes, all o' them old-fashioned cap'ns, when they was free of business and ready to leave port.

"An' they went back to their tavern an' got their bills paid, an' set down kind o' mad with everybody by the front window, mis-

1 Quite drunk.

2 Ruffians.

trusting some o' their tavern charges, like 's not, by that time, an' when they got tempered down, they watched the house over across, where the party was.

"There was a kind of a grove o' trees between the house an' the road, an' they heard the guitar a-goin' an' a-stoppin' short by turns, and pretty soon somebody began to screech, an' they saw a white dress come runnin' out through the bushes, an' tumbled over each other in their haste to offer help; an' out she come, with the guitar, cryin' into the street, and they just walked off four square with her amongst 'em, down toward the wharves where they felt more to home. They couldn't make out at first what 'twas she spoke,—Cap'n Lorenzo Bowden was well acquainted in Havre an' Bordeaux,[1] an' spoke a poor quality o' French, an' she knew a little mite o' English, but not much; and they come somehow or other to discern that she was in real distress. Her husband and her children had died o' yellow fever; they'd all come up to Kingston from one o' the far Wind'ard Islands[2] to get passage on a steamer to France, an' a negro had stole their money off her husband while he lay sick o' the fever, an' she had been befriended some, but the folks that knew about her had died too; it had been a dreadful run o' the fever that season, an' she fell at last to playin' an' singin' for hire, and for what money they'd throw to her round them harbor houses.

"'Twas a real hard case, an' when them cap'ns made out about it, there wa'n't one that meant to take leave without helpin' of her. They was pretty mellow, an' whatever they might lack o' prudence they more 'n made up with charity: they didn't want to see nobody abused, an' she was sort of a pretty woman, an' they stopped in the street then an' there an' drew lots who should take her aboard, bein' all bound home. An' the lot fell to Cap'n Jonathan Bowden who did act discouraged; his vessel had but small accommodations, though he could stow a big freight, an' she was a dreadful slow sailer through bein' square as a box, an' his first wife, that was livin' then, was a dreadful jealous woman. He threw himself right onto the mercy o' Cap'n Tolland."

Mrs. Todd indulged herself for a short time in a season of calm reflection.

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1 French seaports.

2 Part of the Lesser Antilles, the southernmost Caribbean islands consisting of Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Barbados, Grenada, the Grenadines, Trinidad, and Tobago.

"I always thought they'd have done better, and more reasonable, to give her some money to pay her passage home to France, or wherever she may have wanted to go," she continued.

I nodded and looked for the rest of the story.

"Father told mother," said Mrs. Todd confidentially, "that Cap'n Jonathan Bowden an' Cap'n John Tolland had both taken a little more than usual; I wouldn't have you think, either, that they both wasn't the best o' men, an' they was solemn as owls, and argued the matter between 'em, an' waved aside the other two when they tried to put their oars in. An' spite o' Cap'n Tolland's bein' a settled old bachelor they fixed it that he was to take the prize on his brig; she was a fast sailer, and there was a good spare cabin or two where he'd sometimes carried passengers, but he'd filled 'em with bags o' sugar on his own account an' was loaded very heavy beside. He said he'd shift the sugar an' get along somehow, an' the last the other three cap'ns saw of the party was Cap'n John handing the lady into his bo't, guitar and all, an' off they all set tow'ds their ships with their men rowin' 'em in the bright moonlight down to Port Royal[1] where the anchorage was, an' where they all lay, goin' out with the tide an' mornin' wind at break o' day. An' the others thought they heard music of the guitar, two o' the bo'ts kept well together, but it may have come from another source."

"Well; and then?" I asked eagerly after a pause. Mrs. Todd was almost laughing aloud over her knitting and nodding emphatically. We had forgotten all about the noise of the wind and sea.

"Lord bless you! he come sailing into Portland with his sugar, all in good time, an' they stepped right afore a justice o' the peace, and Cap'n John Tolland come paradin' home to Dunnet Landin' a married man. He owned one o' them thin, narrow-lookin' houses with one room each side o' the front door, and two slim black spruces spindlin' up against the front windows to make it gloomy inside. There was no horse nor cattle of course, though he owned pasture land, an' you could see rifts o' light right through the barn as you drove by. And there was a good excellent kitchen, but his sister reigned over that; she had a right to two rooms, and took the kitchen an' a bedroom that led out of it; an' bein' given no rights in the kitchen had angered the cap'n so they weren't on no kind o' speakin' terms. He preferred his old brig for comfort, but now and then, between voyages he'd come

1 Port Royal was the center of shipping commerce in Jamaica in the seventeenth century.

home for a few days, just to show he was master over his part o' the house, and show Eliza she couldn't commit no trespass.

"They stayed a little while; 'twas pretty spring weather, an' I used to see Cap'n John rollin' by with his arms full o' bundles from the store, lookin' as pleased and important as a boy; an' then they went right off to sea again, an' was gone a good many months. Next time he left her to live there alone, after they'd stopped at home together some weeks, an' they said she suffered from bein' at sea, but some said that the owners wouldn't have a woman aboard. 'Twas before father was lost on that last voyage of his, an' he said mother went up once or twice to see them. Father said there wa'n't a mite o' harm in her, but somehow or other a sight o' prejudice arose; it may have been caused by the remarks of Eliza an' her feelin's tow'ds her brother. Even my mother had no regard for Eliza Tolland. But mother asked the cap'n's wife to come with her one evenin' to a social circle that was down to the meetin'-house vestry, so she'd get acquainted a little, an' she appeared very pretty until they started to have some singin' to the melodeon. Mari' Harris an' one o' the younger Caplin girls undertook to sing a duet, an' they sort o' flatted, an' she put her hands right up to her ears, and give a little squeal, an' went quick as could be an' give 'em the right notes, for she could read the music like plain print, an' made 'em try it over again. She was real willin' an' pleasant, but that didn't suit, an' she made faces when they got it wrong. An' then there fell a dead calm, an' we was all settin' round prim as dishes, an' my mother, that never expects ill feelin', asked her if she wouldn't sing somethin', an up she got,—poor creatur', it all seems so different to me now,—an' sung a lovely little song standin' in the floor; it seemed to have something gay about it that kept a-repeatin', an' nobody could help keepin' time, an' all of a sudden she looked round at the tables and caught up a tin plate that somebody'd fetched a Washin'ton pie[1] in, an' she begun to drum on it with her fingers like one o' them tambourines, an' went right on singin' faster an' faster, and next minute she begun to dance a little pretty dance between the verses, just as light and pleasant as a child. You couldn't help seein' how pretty 'twas; we all got to trottin' a foot, an' some o' the men clapped their hands quite loud, a-keepin' time, 'twas so catchin', an' seemed so natural to her. There wa'n't one of 'em but enjoyed it; she just tried to do her part, an' some urged her on, till she stopped with a little twirl of her skirts an'

1 A cake layered with jam or other kinds of fillings.

went to her place again by mother. And I can see mother now, reachin' over an' smilin' an' pattin' her hand.

"But next day there was an awful scandal goin' in the parish, an' Mari' Harris reproached my mother to her face, an' I never wanted to see her since, but I've had to a good many times. I said Mis' Tolland didn't intend no impropriety,—I reminded her of David's dancing, before the Lord;[1] but she said such a man as David never would have thought o' dancin' right there in the Orthodox[2] vestry, and she felt I spoke with irreverence.

"And next sunday Mis' Tolland come walkin' into our meeting, but I must say she acted like a cat in a strange garret, and went right out down the aisle with her head in air, from the pew Deacon Caplin had showed her into. 'Twas just in the beginning of the long prayer. I wish she'd stayed through, whatever her reasons were. Whether she'd expected somethin' different, or misunderstood some o' the pastor's remarks, or what 'twas, I don't really feel able to explain, but she kind o' declared war, at least folks thought so, an' war 'twas from that time. I see she was cryin', or had been, as she passed by me; perhaps bein' in meetin' was what had power to make her feel homesick and strange.

"Cap'n John Tolland was away fittin' out; that next week he come home to see her and say farewell. He was lost with his ship in the Straits of Malacca,[3] and she lived there alone in the old house a few months longer till she died. He left her well off; 'twas said he hid his money about the house and she knew where 'twas. Oh, I expect you've heard that story told over an' over twenty times, since you've been here at the Landin'?"

"Never one word," I insisted.

"It was a good while ago," explained Mrs. Todd, with reassurance. "Yes, it all happened a great while ago."

III.

At this moment, with a sudden flaw of the wind, some wet twigs outside blew against the window panes and made a noise like a distressed creature trying to get in. I started with sudden fear,

1 2 Samuel 6:14: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod."

2 Congregational.

3 A narrow stretch of water between West Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

and so did the cat, but Mrs. Todd knitted away and did not even look over her shoulder.

"She was a good-looking woman; yes, I always thought Mis' Tolland was good-looking, though she had, as was reasonable, a sort of foreign cast, and she spoke very broken English, no better than a child. She was always at work about her house, or settin' at a front window with her sewing; she was a beautiful hand to embroider. Sometimes, summer evenings, when the windows was open, she'd set an' drum on her guitar, but I don't know as I ever heard her sing but once after the cap'n went away. She appeared very happy about havin' him, and took on dreadful at partin' when he was down here on the wharf, going back to Portland by boat to take ship for that last v'y'ge. He acted kind of ashamed, Cap'n John did; folks about here ain't so much accustomed to show their feelings. The whistle had blown an' they was waitin' for him to get aboard, an' he was put to it to know what to do and treated her very affectionate in spite of all impatience; but mother happened to be there and she went an' spoke, and I remember what a comfort she seemed to be. Mis' Tolland clung to her then, and she wouldn't give a glance after the boat when it had started, though the captain was very eager a-wavin' to her. She wanted mother to come home with her an' wouldn't let go her hand, and mother had just come in to stop all night with me an' had plenty o' time ashore, which didn't always happen, so they walked off together, an' 'twas some considerable time before she got back.

"'I want you to neighbor with that poor lonesome creatur',' says mother to me, lookin' reproachful. 'She's a stranger in a strange land,'[1] says mother. 'I want you to make her have a sense that somebody feels kind to her.'

"'Why, since that time she flaunted out o' meetin', folks have felt she liked other ways better'n our'n,' says I. I was provoked, because I'd had a nice supper ready, an' mother'd let it wait so long 'twas spoiled. 'I hope you'll like your supper!' I told her. I was dreadful ashamed afterward of speakin' so to mother.

"'What consequence is my supper?' says she to me; mother can be very stern,—'or your comfort or mine, beside letting a foreign person an' a stranger feel so desolate; she's done the best a woman could do in her lonesome place, and she asks nothing of anybody except a little common kindness. Think if 'twas you in a foreign land!'

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1 Exodus 2:22: "And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land."

"And mother set down to drink her tea, an' I set down humbled enough over by the wall to wait till she finished. An' I did think it all over, an' next day I never said nothin', but I put on my bonnet, and went to see Mis' Cap'n Tolland, if 'twas only for mother's sake. 'Twas about three quarters of a mile up the road here, beyond the schoolhouse. I forgot to tell you that the cap'n had bought out his sister's right at three or four times what 'twas worth, to save trouble, so they'd got clear o' her, an' I went round into the side yard sort o' friendly an' sociable, rather than stop an' deal with the knocker an' the front door. It looked so pleasant an' pretty I was glad I come; she had set a little table for supper, though 'twas still early, with a white cloth on it, right out under an old apple tree close by the house. I noticed 'twas same as with me at home, there was only one plate. She was just coming out with a dish; you couldn't see the door nor the table from the road.

"In the few weeks she'd been there she'd got some bloomin' pinks an' other flowers next the doorstep. Somehow it looked as if she'd known how to make it homelike for the cap'n. She asked me to set down; she was very polite, but she looked very mournful, and I spoke of mother, an' she put down her dish and caught holt o' me with both hands an' said my mother was an angel. When I see the tears in her eyes 'twas all right between us, and we were always friendly after that, and mother had us come out and make a little visit that summer; but she come a foreigner and she went a foreigner, and never was anything but a stranger among our folks. She taught me a sight o' things about herbs I never knew before nor since; she was well acquainted with the virtues o' plants. She'd act awful secret about some things too, an' used to work charms for herself sometimes, an' some o' the neighbors told to an' fro after she died that they knew enough not to provoke her, but 'twas all nonsense; 'tis the believin' in such things that causes 'em to be any harm, an' so I told 'em," confided Mrs. Todd contemptuously. "That first night I stopped to tea with her she'd cooked some eggs with some herb or other sprinkled all through, and 'twas she that first led me to discern mushrooms; an' she went right down on her knees in my garden here when she saw I had my different officious[1] herbs. Yes, 'twas she that learned me the proper use o' parsley too; she was a beautiful cook."

Mrs. Todd stopped talking, and rose, putting the cat gently in the chair, while she went away to get another stick of apple-tree

1 Helpful (archaic).

wood. It was not an evening when one wished to let the fire go down, and we had a splendid bank of bright coals. I had always wondered where Mrs. Todd had got such an unusual knowledge of cookery, of the varieties of mushrooms, and the use of sorrel as a vegetable, and other blessings of that sort. I had long ago learned that she could vary her omelettes like a child of France, which was indeed a surprise in Dunnet Landing.

IV.

All these revelations were of the deepest interest, and I was ready with a question as soon as Mrs. Todd came in and had well settled the fire and herself and the cat again.

"I wonder why she never went back to France, after she was left alone?"

"She come here from the French islands," explained Mrs. Todd. "I asked her once about her folks, an' she said they were all dead; 'twas the fever took 'em. She made this her home, lonesome as 'twas; she told me she hadn't been in France since she was 'so small,' and measured me off a child o' six. She'd lived right out in the country before, so that part wa'n't unusual to her. Oh yes, there was something very strange about her, and she hadn't been brought up in high circles nor nothing o' that kind. I think she'd been really pleased to have the cap'n marry her an' give her a good home, after all she'd passed through, and leave her free with his money an' all that. An' she got over bein' so strange-looking to me after a while, but 'twas a very singular expression: she wore a fixed smile that wa'n't a smile; there wa'n't no light behind it, same 's a lamp can't shine if it ain't lit. I don't know just how to express it, 'twas a sort of made countenance."

One could not help thinking of Sir Philip Sidney's phrase, "A made countenance, between simpering and smiling."[1]

"She took it hard, havin' the captain go off on that last voyage," Mrs. Todd went on. "She said somethin' told her when they was partin' that he would never come back. He was lucky to speak a home-bound ship this side o' the Cape o' Good Hope,[2] an' got a chance to send her a letter, an' that cheered her up. You often felt as if you was dealin' with a child's mind, for all she had so much information that other folks hadn't. I was a sight

1 Poet, courtier, and soldier, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) wrote these words in Book One of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1580).

2 See note 2, p. 145.

younger than I be now, and she made me imagine new things, and I got interested watchin' her an' findin' out what she had to say, but you couldn't get to no affectionateness with her. I used to blame me sometimes; we used to be real good comrades goin' off for an afternoon, but I never give her a kiss till the day she laid in her coffin and it come to my heart there wa'n't no one else to do it."

"And Captain Tolland died," I suggested after a while.

"Yes, the cap'n was lost," said Mrs. Todd, "and of course word didn't come for a good while after it happened. The letter come from the owners to my uncle, Cap'n Lorenzo Bowden, who was in charge of Cap'n Tolland's affairs at home, and he come right up for me an' said I must go with him to the house. I had known what it was to be a widow, myself, for near a year, an' there was plenty o' widow women along this coast that the sea had made desolate, but I never saw a heart break as I did then.

"'Twas this way: we walked together along the road, me an' uncle Lorenzo. You know how it leads straight from just above the schoolhouse to the brook bridge, and their house was just this side o' the brook bridge on the left hand; the cellar's there now, and a couple or three good-sized gray birches growin' in it. And when we come near enough I saw that the best room, this way, where she most never set, was all lighted up, and the curtains up so that the light shone bright down the road, and as we walked, those lights would dazzle and dazzle in my eyes, and I could hear the guitar a-goin', an' she was singin'. She heard our steps with her quick ears and come running to the door with her eyes a-shinin', an' all that set look gone out of her face, an' begun to talk French, gay as a bird, an' shook hands and behaved very pretty an' girlish, sayin' 'twas her fête day.[1] I didn't know what she meant then. And she had gone an' put a wreath o' flowers on her hair an' wore a handsome gold chain that the cap'n had given her; an' there she was, poor creatur', makin' believe have a party all alone in her best room; 'twas prim enough to discourage a person, with too many chairs set close to the walls, just as the cap'n's mother had left it, but she had put sort o' long garlands on the walls, droopin' very graceful, and a sight of green boughs in the corners, till it looked lovely, and all lit up with a lot o' candles."

"Oh dear!" I sighed. "Oh, Mrs. Todd, what did you do?"

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1 A festival in honor of the saint after whom one is named, celebrated as a birthday.

"She beheld our countenances," answered Mrs. Todd solemnly. "I expect they was telling everything plain enough, but Cap'n Lorenzo spoke the sad words to her as if he had been her father; and she wavered a minute and then over she went on the floor before we could catch hold of her, and then we tried to bring her to herself and failed, and at last we carried her upstairs, an' I told uncle to run down and put out the lights, and then go fast as he could for Mrs. Begg, being very experienced in sickness, an' he so did. I got off her clothes and her poor wreath, and I cried as I done it. We both stayed there that night, and the doctor said 'twas a shock[1] when he come in the morning; he'd been over to Black Island an' had to stay all night with a very sick child."

"You said that she lived alone some time after the news came," I reminded Mrs. Todd then.

"Oh yes, dear," answered my friend sadly, "but it wa'n't what you'd call livin'; no, it was only dyin', though at a snail's pace. She never went out again those few months, but for a while she could manage to get about the house a little, and do what was needed, an' I never let two days go by without seein' her or hearin' from her. She never took much notice as I came an' went except to answer if I asked her anything. Mother was the one who gave her the only comfort."

"What was that?" I asked softly.

"She said that anybody in such trouble ought to see their minister, mother did, and one day she spoke to Mis' Tolland, and found that the poor soul had been believin' all the time that there weren't any priests here. We'd come to know she was a Catholic by her beads[2] and all, and that had set some narrow minds against her. And mother explained it just as she would to a child; and uncle Lorenzo sent word right off somewheres up river by a packet that was bound up the bay, and the first o' the week a priest come by the boat, an' uncle Lorenzo was on the wharf 'tendin' to some business; so they just come up for me, and I walked with him to show him the house. He was a kind-hearted old man; he looked so benevolent an' fatherly I could ha' stopped an' told him my own troubles; yes, I was satisfied when I first saw his face, an' when poor Mis' Tolland beheld him enter the room, she went right down on her knees and clasped her hands together

1 A critical condition brought on by a sudden drop in blood flow through the body.

2 Her rosary beads.

to him as if he'd come to save her life, and he lifted her up and blessed her, an' I left 'em together, and slipped out into the open field and walked there in sight so if they needed to call me, and I had my own thoughts. At last I saw him at the door; he had to catch the return boat. I meant to walk back with him and offer him some supper, but he said no, and said he was comin' again if needed, and signed me to go into the house to her, and shook his head in a way that meant he understood everything. I can see him now; he walked with a cane, rather tired and feeble; I wished somebody would come along, so 's to carry him down to the shore.

"Mis' Tolland looked up at me with a new look when I went in, an' she even took hold o' my hand and kept it. He had put some oil on her forehead,[1] but nothing anybody could do would keep her alive very long; 'twas his medicine for the soul rather 'n the body. I helped her to bed, and next morning she couldn't get up to dress her, and that was Monday, and she began to fail, and 'twas Friday night she died." (Mrs. Todd spoke with unusual haste and lack of detail.) "Mrs. Begg and I watched with her, and made everything nice and proper, and after all the ill will there was a good number gathered to the funeral. 'Twas in Reverend Mr. Bascom's day, and he done very well in his prayer, considering he couldn't fill in with mentioning all the near connections by name as was his habit. He spoke very feeling about her being a stranger and twice widowed, and all he said about her being reared among the heathen was to observe that there might be roads leadin' up to the New Jerusalem[2] from various points. I says to myself that I guessed quite a number must ha' reached there that wa'n't able to set out from Dunnet Landin'!"

Mrs. Todd gave an odd little laugh as she bent toward the firelight to pick up a dropped stitch in her knitting, and then I heard a heartfelt sigh.

'Twas most forty years ago," she said; "most everybody's gone a'ready that was there that day."

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1 In Catholicism, this is part of the sacrament of Anointing the Sick, both for physical and spiritual afflictions.

2 Revelation 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him in the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name," and 21:2: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

V.

Suddenly Mrs. Todd gave an energetic shrug of her shoulders, and a quick look at me, and I saw that the sails of her narrative were filled with a fresh breeze.

"Uncle Lorenzo, Cap'n Bowden that I have referred to"—

"Certainly!" I agreed with eager expectation.

"He was the one that had been left in charge of Cap'n John Tolland's affairs, and had now come to be of unforeseen importance.

"Mrs. Begg an' I had stayed in the house both before an' after Mis' Tolland's decease, and she was now in haste to be gone, having affairs to call her home; but uncle come to me as the exercises was beginning, and said he thought I'd better remain at the house while they went to the buryin' ground. I couldn't understand his reasons, an' I felt disappointed, bein' as near to her as most anybody; 'twas rough weather, so mother couldn't get in, and didn't even hear Mis' Tolland was gone till next day. I just nodded to satisfy him, 'twa'n't no time to discuss anything. Uncle seemed flustered; he'd gone out deep-sea fishin' the day she died, and the storm I told you of rose very sudden, so they got blown off way down the coast beyond Monhegan,[1] and he'd just got back in time to dress himself and come.

"I set there in the house after I'd watched her away down the straight road far 's I could see from the door; 'twas a little short walkin' funeral an' a cloudy sky, so everything looked dull an' gray, an' it crawled along all in one piece, same 's walking funerals do, an' I wondered how it ever come to the Lord's mind to let her begin down among them gay islands all heat and sun, and end up here among the rocks with a north wind blowin'. 'Twas a gale that begun the afternoon before she died, and had kept blowin' off an' on ever since. I'd thought more than once how glad I should be to get home an' out o' sound o' them black spruces a-beatin' an' scratchin' at the front windows.

"I set to work pretty soon to put the chairs back, an' set outdoors some that was borrowed, an' I went out in the kitchen, an' I made up a good fire in case somebody come an' wanted a cup o' tea; but I didn't expect any one to travel way back to the house unless 'twas uncle Lorenzo. 'Twas growin' so chilly that I fetched some kindlin' wood and made fires in both the fore rooms. Then I set down an' begun to feel as usual, and I got my knittin' out of

1 An island about twelve miles off the mid-Maine coast.

a drawer. You can't be sorry for a poor creatur' that's come to the end o' all her troubles; my only discomfort was I thought I'd ought to feel worse at losin' her than I did; I was younger then than I be now. And as I set there, I begun to hear some long notes o' dronin' music from upstairs that chilled me to the bone."

Mrs. Todd gave a hasty glance at me.

"Quick 's I could gather me, I went right upstairs to see what 'twas," she added eagerly, "an 'twas just what I might ha' known. She'd always kept her guitar hangin' right against the wall in her room; 'twas tied by a blue ribbon, and there was a window left wide open; the wind was veerin' a good deal, an' it slanted in and searched the room. The strings was jarrin' yet.

"'Twas growin' pretty late in the afternoon, an' I begun to feel lonesome as I shouldn't now, and I was disappointed at having to stay there, the more I thought it over, but after a while I saw Cap'n Lorenzo polin' back up the road all alone, and when he come nearer I could see he had a bundle under his arm and had shifted his best black clothes for his every-day ones. I run out and put some tea into the teapot and set it back on the stove to draw, an' when he come in I reached down a little jug o' spirits,—Cap'n Tolland had left his house well provisioned as if his wife was goin' to put to sea same 's himself, an' there she'd gone an' left it. There was some cake that Mis' Begg an' I had made the day before. I thought that uncle an' me had a good right to the funeral supper, even if there wa'n't any one to join us. I was lookin' forward to my cup o' tea; 'twas beautiful tea out of a green lacquered chest that I've got now."

"You must have felt very tired," said I, eagerly listening.

"I was 'most beat out, with watchin' an' tendin' and all," answered Mrs. Todd, with as much sympathy in her voice as if she were speaking of another person. "But I called out to uncle as he came in, 'Well, I expect it's all over now, an' we've all done what we could. I thought we'd better have some tea or somethin' before we go home. Come right out in the kitchen, sir,' says I, never thinking but we only had to let the fires out and lock up everything safe an' eat our refreshment, an' go home.

"'I want both of us to stop here to-night,' says uncle, looking at me very important.

"'Oh, what for?' says I, kind o' fretful.

"'I've got my proper reasons,' says uncle. 'I'll see you well satisfied, Almira. Your tongue ain't so easy-goin' as some o' the women folks, an' there's property here to take charge of that you don't know nothin' at all about.'

"'What do you mean?' says I.

"'Cap'n Tolland acquainted me with his affairs; he hadn't no sort o' confidence in nobody but me an' his wife, after he was tricked into signin' that Portland note, an' lost money. An' she didn't know nothin' about business; but what he didn't take to sea to be sunk with him he's hid somewhere in this house. I expect Mis' Tolland may have told you where she kept things?' said uncle.

"I see he was dependin' a good deal on my answer," said Mrs. Todd, "but I had to disappoint him; no, she had never said nothin' to me.

"'Well, then, we've got to make a search,' says he, with considerable relish; but he was all tired and worked up, and we set down to the table, an' he had somethin', an' I took my desired cup o' tea, and then I begun to feel more interested.

"'Where you goin' to look first?' says I, but he give me a short look an' made no answer, and begun to mix me a very small portion out of the jug, in another glass. I took it to please him; he said I looked tired, speakin' real fatherly, and I did feel better for it, and we set talkin' a few minutes, an' then he started for the cellar, carrying an old ship's lantern he fetched out o' the stairway an' lit.

"'What are you lookin' for, some kind of a chist?' I inquired, and he said yes. All of a sudden it come to me to ask who was the heirs; Eliza Tolland, Cap'n John's own sister, had never demeaned herself to come near the funeral, and uncle Lorenzo faced right about and begun to laugh, sort o' pleased. I thought queer of it; 't wa'n't what he'd taken, which would be nothin' to an old weathered sailor like him.

"'Who's the heir?' says I the second time.

"'Why, it's *you*, Almiry,' says he; and I was so took aback I set right down on the turn o' the cellar stairs.

"'Yes, 'tis,' said uncle Lorenzo. 'I'm glad of it too. Some thought she didn't have no sense but foreign sense, an' a poor stock o' that, but she said you was friendly to her, an' one day after she got news of Tolland's death, an' I had fetched up his will that left everything to her, she said she was goin' to make a writin', so 's you could have things after she was gone, an' she give five hundred to me for bein' executor. Square[1] Pease fixed up the paper, an' she signed it; it's all accordin' to law.' There, I begun to cry," said Mrs. Todd; "I couldn't help it. I wished I had her back again to do somethin' for, an' to make her know I felt

1 Squire.

sisterly to her more 'n I'd ever showed, an' it come over me 'twas all too late, an' I cried the more, till uncle showed impatience, an' I got up an' stumbled along down cellar with my apern to my eyes the greater part of the time.

"'I'm goin' to have a clean search,' says he; 'you hold the light.' An' I held it, and he rummaged in the arches an' under the stairs, an' over in some old closet where he reached out bottles an' stone jugs an' canted some kags an' one or two casks, an' chuckled well when he heard there was somethin' inside,—but there wa'n't nothin' to find but things usual in a cellar, an' then the old lantern was givin' out an' we come away.

"'He spoke to me of a chist, Cap'n Tolland did,' says uncle in a whisper. 'He said a good sound chist was as safe a bank as there was, an' I beat him out of such nonsense, 'count o' fire an' other risks.' 'There's no chist in the rooms above,' says I; 'no, uncle, there ain't no sea-chist, for I've been here long enough to see what there was to be seen.' Yet he wouldn't feel contented till he'd mounted up into the toploft; 'twas one o' them single, hip-roofed houses that don't give proper accommodation for a real garret, like Cap'n Littlepage's down here at the Landin'. There was broken furniture and rubbish, an' he let down a terrible sight o' dust into the front entry, but sure enough there wasn't no chist. I had it all to sweep up next day.

"'He must have took it away to sea,' says I to the cap'n, an' even then he didn't want to agree, but we was both beat out. I told him where I'd always seen Mis' Tolland get her money from, and we found much as a hundred dollars there in an old red morocco wallet. Cap'n John had been gone a good while a'ready, and she had spent what she needed. 'Twas in an old desk o' his in the settin' room that we found the wallet."

"At the last minute he may have taken his money to sea," I suggested.

"Oh yes," agreed Mrs. Todd. "He did take considerable to make his venture to bring home, as was customary, an' that was drowned with him as uncle agreed; but he had other property in shipping, and a thousand dollars invested in Portland in a cordage[1] shop, but 'twas about the time shipping begun to decay, and the cordage shop failed, and in the end I wa'n't so rich as I thought I was goin' to be for those few minutes on the cellar stairs. There was an auction that accumulated something. Old Mis' Tolland, the cap'n's mother, had heired some good furniture from a sister: there was

1 Cords or ropes, as in those used to rig a ship.

above thirty chairs in all, and they're apt to sell well. I got over a thousand dollars when we come to settle up, and I made uncle take his five hundred; he was getting along in years and had met with losses in navigation, and he left it back to me when he died, so I had a real good lift. It all lays in the bank over to Rockland,[1] and I draw my interest fall an' spring, with the little Mr. Todd was able to leave me; but that's kind o' sacred money; 'twas earnt and saved with the hope o' youth, an' I'm very particular what I spend it for. Oh yes, what with ownin' my house, I've been enabled to get along very well, with prudence!" said Mrs. Todd contentedly.

"But there was the house and land," I asked,—"what became of that part of the property?"

Mrs. Todd looked into the fire, and a shadow of disapproval flitted over her face.

"Poor old uncle!" she said, "he got childish about the matter. I was hoping to sell at first, and I had an offer, but he always run of an idea that there was more money hid away, and kept wanting me to delay; an' he used to go up there all alone and search, and dig in the cellar, empty an' bleak as 'twas in winter weather or any time. An' he'd come and tell me he'd dreamed he found gold behind a stone in the cellar wall, or somethin'. And one night we all see the light o' fire up that way, an' the whole Landin' took the road, and run to look, and the Tolland property was all in a light blaze. I expect the old gentleman had dropped fire about; he said he'd been up there to see if everything was safe in the afternoon. As for the land, 'twas so poor that everybody used to have a joke that the Tolland boys preferred to farm the sea instead. It's 'most all grown up to bushes now, where it ain't poor water grass[2] in the low places. There's some upland that has a pretty view, after you cross the brook bridge. Years an' years after she died, there was some o' her flowers used to come up an' bloom in the door garden. I brought two or three that was unusual down here; they always come up and remind me of her constant as the spring. But I never did want to fetch home that guitar, some way or 'nother; I wouldn't let it go at the auction, either. It was hangin' right there in the house when the fire took place. I've got some o' her other little things scattered about the house: that picture on the mantelpiece belonged to her."

I had often wondered where such a picture had come from, and why Mrs. Todd had chosen it; it was a French print of the

1 A city in the mid-coastal Maine region.

2 Numerous grassy weed species are termed water grass.

statue of the Empress Josephine[1] in the Savane at old Fort Royal, in Martinique.

VI.

Mrs. Todd drew her chair closer to mine; she held the cat and her knitting with one hand as she moved, but the cat was so warm and so sound asleep that she only stretched a lazy paw in spite of what must have felt like a slight earthquake. Mrs. Todd began to speak almost in a whisper.

"I ain't told you all," she continued; "no, I haven't spoken of all to but very few. The way it came was this," she said solemnly, and then stopped to listen to the wind, and sat for a moment in deferential silence, as if she waited for the wind to speak first. The cat suddenly lifted her head with quick excitement and gleaming eyes, and her mistress was leaning forward toward the fire with an arm laid on either knee, as if they were consulting the glowing coals for some augury. Mrs. Todd looked like an old prophetess as she sat there with the firelight shining on her strong face; she was posed for some great painter. The woman with the cat was as unconscious and as mysterious as any sibyl of the Sistine Chapel.[2]

"There, that's the last struggle o' the gale," said Mrs. Todd, nodding her head with impressive certainty and still looking into the bright embers of the fire. "You'll see!" She gave me another quick glance, and spoke in a low tone as if we might be overheard.

"'Twas such a gale as this the night Mis' Tolland died. She appeared more comfortable the first o' the evenin'; and Mrs. Begg was more spent than I, bein' older, and a beautiful nurse that was the first to see and think of everything, but perfectly quiet an' never asked a useless question. You remember her funeral when you first come to the Landing?[3] And she consented to goin' an' havin' a good sleep while she could, and left me one

1 Josephine de Beauharnais (1763-1814), the first wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, hailed from the French island of Martinique.

2 In his work on Rome's Sistine Chapel (between 1508 and 1512), Michelangelo (1475-1564) painted the Persian, Erythaean, Delphic, Cumaean, and Libyan sibyls as part of the twelve prophetic figures who represented the coming of Christ.

3 Mrs. Begg's funeral occurs in Chapter 4 of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, "At the Schoolhouse Window."

o' those good little pewter lamps that burnt whale oil an' made plenty o' light in the room, but not too bright to be disturbin'.

"Poor Mis' Tolland had been distressed the night before, an' all that day, but as night come on she grew more and more easy, an' was layin' there asleep; 'twas like settin' by any sleepin' person, and I had none but usual thoughts. When the wind lulled and the rain, I could hear the seas, though more distant than this, and I don' know 's I observed any other sound than what the weather made; 'twas a very solemn feelin' night. I set close by the bed; there was times she looked to find somebody when she was awake. The light was on her face, so I could see her plain; there was always times when she wore a look that made her seem a stranger you'd never set eyes on before. I did think what a world it was that her an' me should have come together so, and she have nobody but Dunnet Landin' folks about her in her extremity. 'You're one o' the stray ones, poor creatur',' I said. I remember those very words passin' through my mind, but I saw reason to be glad she had some comforts, and didn't lack friends at the last, though she'd seen misery an' pain. I was glad she was quiet; all day she'd been restless, and we couldn't understand what she wanted from her French speech. We had the window open to give her air, an' now an' then a gust would strike that guitar that was on the wall and set it swinging by the blue ribbon, and soundin' as if somebody begun to play it. I come near takin' it down, but you never know what'll fret a sick person an' put 'em on the rack, an' that guitar was one o' the few things she'd brought with her."

I nodded assent, and Mrs. Todd spoke still lower.

"I set there close by the bed; I'd been through a good deal for some days back, and I thought I might 's well be droppin' asleep too, bein' a quick person to wake. She looked to me as if she might last a day longer, certain, now she'd got more comfortable, but I was real tired, an' sort o' cramped as watchers will get, an' a fretful feeling begun to creep over me such as they often do have. If you give way, there ain't no support for the sick person; they can't count on no composure o' their own. Mis' Tolland moved then, a little restless, an' I forgot me quick enough, an' begun to hum out a little part of a hymn tune just to make her feel everything was as usual an' not wake up into a poor uncertainty. All of a sudden she set right up in bed with her eyes wide open, an' I stood an' put my arm behind her; she hadn't moved like that for days. And she reached out both her arms toward the door, an' I looked the way she was lookin', an' I see some one was standin' there against the dark. No, 'twa'n't Mis' Begg; 'twas

somebody a good deal shorter than Mis' Begg. The lamplight struck across the room between us. I couldn't tell the shape, but 'twas a woman's dark face lookin' right at us; 'twa'n't but an instant I could see. I felt dreadful cold, and my head begun to swim; I thought the light went out; 'twa'n't but an instant, as I say, an' when my sight come back I couldn't see nothing there. I was one that didn't know what it was to faint away, no matter what happened; time was I felt above it in others, but 'twas somethin' that made poor human natur' quail. I saw very plain while I could see; 'twas a pleasant enough face, shaped somethin' like Mis' Tolland's, and a kind of expectin' look.

"No, I don't expect I was asleep," Mrs. Todd assured me quietly, after a moment's pause, though I had not spoken. She gave a heavy sigh before she went on. I could see that the recollection moved her in the deepest way.

"I suppose if I hadn't been so spent an' quavery with long watchin', I might have kept my head an' observed much better," she added humbly; "but I see all I could bear. I did try to act calm, an' I laid Mis' Tolland down on her pillow, an' I was a-shakin' as I done it. All she did was to look up to me so satisfied and sort o' questioning, an I looked back to her.

"'You saw her, didn't you?' she says to me, speakin' perfectly reasonable. 'Tis my mother,' she says again, very feeble, but lookin' straight up at me, kind of surprised with the pleasure, and smiling as if she saw I was overcome, an' would have said more if she could, but we had hold of hands. I see then her change was comin', but I didn't call Mis' Begg, nor make no uproar. I felt calm then, an' lifted to somethin' different as I never was since. She opened her eyes just as she was goin'—

"'You saw her, didn't you?' she said the second time, an' I says, '*Yes, dear, I did; you ain't never goin' to feel strange an' lonesome no more*.' An' then in a few quiet minutes 'twas all over. I felt they'd gone away together. No, I wa'n't alarmed afterward; 'twas just that one moment I couldn't live under, but I never called it beyond reason I should see the other watcher. I saw plain enough there was somebody there with me in the room.

VII.

"'Twas just such a night as this Mis' Tolland died," repeated Mrs. Todd, returning to her usual tone and leaning back comfortably in her chair as she took up her knitting. "'Twas just such a night as this. I've told the circumstances to but very few; but I don't call

it beyond reason. When folks is goin' 'tis all natural, and only common things can jar upon the mind. You know plain enough there's somethin' beyond this world; the doors stand wide open.[1] 'There's somethin' of us that must still live on; we've got to join both worlds together an' live in one but for the other.'[2] The doctor said that to me one day, an' I never could forget it; he said 'twas in one o' his old doctor's books."

We sat together in silence in the warm little room; the rain dropped heavily from the eaves, and the sea still roared, but the high wind had done blowing. We heard the far complaining fog horn of a steamer up the Bay.

"There goes the Boston boat out, pretty near on time," said Mrs. Todd with satisfaction. "Sometimes these late August storms'll sound a good deal worse than they really be. I do hate to hear the poor steamers callin' when they're bewildered in thick nights in winter, comin' on the coast. Yes, there goes the boat; they'll find it rough at sea, but the storm's all over."

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1 In his sermon of 27 November 1867, the Reverend Dr. Christopher Newman Hall (1816-1902), a British Nonconformist clergyman and ardent abolitionist, stated that "As a ragged, mud-stained traveler, toiling along the road, I see before me the palace of the Great King. Dare I venture near the gateway and seek an audience? Will not the guards laugh at my request, or punish my presumption? Such fears are groundless. The doors stand wide open by day and by night. I have only to enter."

2 From Sir Thomas Browne's (1605-82) *Christian Morals* (published posthumously in 1716): "Time past is gone like a Shadow; make time to come present. Approximate thy latter times by present apprehensions of them: be like a neighbour unto the Grave, and think there is but little to come. And since there is something of us that will still live on, join both lives together, and live in one but for the other."

William's Wedding (1910)

I.

The hurry of life in a large town, the constant putting aside of preference to yield to a most unsatisfactory activity, began to vex me, and one day I took the train, and only left it for the eastward-bound boat. Carlyle says somewhere that the only happiness a man ought to ask for is happiness enough to get his work done;[1] and against this the complexity and futile ingenuity of social life seems a conspiracy. But the first salt wind from the east, the first sight of a lighthouse set boldly on its outer rock, the flash of a gull, the waiting procession of seaward-bound firs on an island, made me feel solid and definite again, instead of a poor, incoherent being. Life was resumed, and anxious living blew away as if it had not been. I could not breathe deep enough or long enough. It was a return to happiness.

The coast had still a wintry look; it was far on in May, but all the shore looked cold and sterile. One was conscious of going north as well as east, and as the day went on the sea grew colder, and all the warmer air and bracing strength and stimulus of the autumn weather, and storage of the heat of summer, were quite gone. I was very cold and very tired when I came at evening up the lower bay, and saw the white houses of Dunnet Landing climbing the hill. They had a friendly look, these little houses, not as if they were climbing up the shore, but as if they were rather all coming down to meet a fond and weary traveler, and I could hardly wait with patience to step off the boat. It was not the usual eager company on the wharf. The coming-in of the mail-boat was the one large public event of a summer day, and I was disappointed at seeing none of my intimate friends but Johnny Bowden, who had evidently done nothing all winter but grow, so that his short sea-smitten clothes gave him a look of poverty.

Johnny's expression did not change as we greeted each other, but I suddenly felt that I had shown indifference and inconvenient delay by not coming sooner; before I could make an apology he took my small portmanteau, and walking before me in his old fashion he made straight up the hilly road toward Mrs. Todd's.

1 Scottish essayist and satirist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in *Past and Present* (1843), Book 3, Chapter 4, writes that "The only happiness a brave person ever troubles themselves in asking about, is happiness enough to get their work done."

Yes, he was much grown—it had never occurred to me the summer before that Johnny was likely, with the help of time and other forces, to grow into a young man; he was such a well-framed and well-settled chunk of a boy that nature seemed to have set him aside as something finished, quite satisfactory and entirely completed.

The wonderful little green garden had been enchanted away by winter. There were a few frost-bitten twigs and some thin shrubbery against the fence, but it was a most unpromising small piece of ground. My heart was beating like a lover's as I passed it on the way to the door of Mrs. Todd's house, which seemed to have become much smaller under the influence of winter weather.

"She hasn't gone away?" I asked Johnny Bowden with a sudden anxiety just as we reached the doorstep.

"Gone away!" he faced me with blank astonishment,—"I see her settin' by Mis' Caplin's window, the one nighest the road, about four o'clock!" And eager with suppressed news of my coming he made his entrance as if the house were a burrow.

Then on my homesick heart fell the voice of Mrs. Todd. She stopped, through what I knew to be excess of feeling, to rebuke Johnny for bringing in so much mud, and I dallied without for one moment during the ceremony; then we met again face to face.

II.

"I dare say you can advise me what shapes they are going to wear. My meetin'-bunnit ain't going to do me again this year; no! I can't expect 'twould do me forever," said Mrs. Todd, as soon as she could say anything. "There! do set down and tell me how you have been! We've got a weddin' in the family, I s'pose you know?"

"A wedding!" said I, still full of excitement.

"Yes; I expect if the tide serves and the line-storm[1] don't overtake him they'll come in and appear out on Sunday. I shouldn't have concerned me about the bunnit for a month yet, nobody would notice, but havin' an occasion like this I shall show consider'ble. 'Twill be an ordeal for William!"

"For *William*!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean, Mrs. Todd?"

She gave a comfortable little laugh. "Well, the Lord's seen reason at last an' removed Mis' Cap'n Hight up to the farm, an'

1 See note 1, p. 182.

I don't know but the weddin's going to be this week. Esther's had a great deal of business disposin' of her flock, but she's done extra well—the folks that owns the next place goin' up country are well off. 'Tis elegant land north side o' that bleak ridge, an' one o' the boys has been Esther's right-hand man of late. She instructed him in all matters, and after she markets the early lambs he's goin' to take the farm on halves, an' she's give the refusal to him to buy her out within two years. She's reserved the buryin'-lot, an' the right o' way in, an'—"

I couldn't stop for details. I demanded reassurance of the central fact.

"William going to be married?" I repeated; whereat Mrs. Todd gave me a searching look that was not without scorn.

"Old Mis' Hight's funeral was a week ago Wednesday, and 'twas very well attended," she assured me after a moment's pause.

"Poor thing!" said I, with a sudden vision of her helplessness and angry battle against the fate of illness; "it was very hard for her."

"I thought it was hard for Esther!" said Mrs. Todd without sentiment.

III.

I had an odd feeling of strangeness: I missed the garden, and the little rooms, to which I had added a few things of my own the summer before, seemed oddly unfamiliar. It was like the hermit crab in a cold new shell,—and with the windows shut against the raw May air, and a strange silence and grayness of the sea all that first night and day of my visit, I felt as if I had after all lost my hold of that quiet life.

Mrs. Todd made the apt suggestion that city persons were prone to run themselves to death, and advised me to stay and get properly rested now that I had taken the trouble to come. She did not know how long I had been homesick for the conditions of life at the Landing the autumn before—it was natural enough to feel a little unsupported by compelling incidents on my return.

Some one has said that one never leaves a place, or arrives at one, until the next day! But on the second morning I woke with the familiar feeling of interest and ease, and the bright May sun was streaming in, while I could hear Mrs. Todd's heavy footsteps pounding about in the other part of the house as if something

were going to happen. There was the first golden robin[1] singing somewhere close to the house, and a lovely aspect of spring now, and I looked at the garden to see that in the warm night some of its treasures had grown a hand's breadth; the determined spikes of yellow daffies[2] stood tall against the doorsteps, and the bloodroot[3] was unfolding leaf and flower. The belated spring which I had left behind farther south had overtaken me on this northern coast. I even saw a presumptuous dandelion in the garden border.

It is difficult to report the great events of New England; expression is so slight, and those few words which escape us in moments of deep feeling look but meagre on the printed page. One has to assume too much of the dramatic fervor as one reads; but as I came out of my room at breakfast-time I met Mrs. Todd face to face, and when she said to me, "This weather'll bring William in after her; 'tis their happy day!" I felt something take possession of me which ought to communicate itself to the least sympathetic reader of this cold page. It is written for those who have a Dunnet Landing of their own: who either kindly share this with its writer, or possess another.

"I ain't seen his comin' sail yet; he'll be likely to dodge round among the islands so he'll be the less observed," continued Mrs. Todd. "You can get a dory up the bay, even a clean new painted one, if you know as how, keepin' it against the high land." She stepped to the door and looked off to sea as she spoke. I could see her eye follow the gray shores to and fro, and then a bright light spread over her calm face. "There he comes, and he's striking right in across the open bay like a man!" she said with splendid approval. "See, there he comes! Yes, there's William, and he's bent his new sail."

I looked too, and saw the fleck of white no larger than a gull's wing yet, but present to her eager vision.

I was going to France for the whole long summer that year, and the more I thought of such an absence from these simple scenes the more dear and delightful they became. Santa Teresa says that the true proficiency of the soul is not in much thinking,

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1 Baltimore oriole.

2 Daffodils.

3 A relative of the poppy, bloodroot takes its name from its red root that was used as dye and as warpaint by Native Americans.

but in much loving,[1] and sometimes I believed that I had never found love in its simplicity as I had found it at Dunnet Landing in the various hearts of Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd and William. It is only because one came to know them, these three, loving and wise and true, in their own habitations. Their counterparts are in every village in the world, thank heaven, and the gift to one's life is only in its discernment. I had only lived in Dunnet until the usual distractions and artifices of the world were no longer in control, and I saw these simple natures clear. "The happiness of life is in its recognitions. It seems that we are not ignorant of these truths, and even that we believe them; but we are so little accustomed to think of them, they are so strange to us—"[2]

"Well now, deary me!" said Mrs. Todd, breaking into exclamation; "I've got to fly round—I thought he'd have to beat; he can't sail far on that tack, and he won't be in for a good hour yet—I expect he's made every arrangement, but he said he shouldn't go up after Esther unless the weather was good, and I declare it did look doubtful this morning."

I remembered Esther's weather-worn face. She was like a Frenchwoman who had spent her life in the fields. I remembered her pleasant look, her childlike eyes, and thought of the astonishment of joy she would feel now in being taken care of and tenderly sheltered from wind and weather after all these years. They were going to be young again now, she and William, to forget work and care in the spring weather. I could hardly wait for the boat to come to land, I was so eager to see his happy face.

"Cake an' wine I'm goin' to set 'em out!" said Mrs. Todd. "They won't stop to set down for an ordered meal, they'll want to get right out home quick 's they can. Yes, I'll give 'em some cake an' wine—I've got a rare plum-cake from my best receipt, and a bottle o' wine that the old Cap'n Denton of all give me, one of two, the day I was married, one we had and one we saved, and I've never touched it till now. He said there wa'n't none like it in the State o' Maine."

It was a day of waiting, that day of spring; the May weather was as expectant as our fond hearts, and one could see the grass grow green hour by hour. The warm air was full of birds, there

1 Spanish mystic and Carmelite nun Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515-82) writes in *El Castillo Interior* (1577, *The Interior Castle*) that "The true proficiency of the soul consists not so much in deep thinking or eloquent speaking or beautiful writing as in much and warm loving."

2 Reference unknown.

was a glow of light on the sea instead of the cold shining of chilly weather which had lingered late. There was a look on Mrs. Todd's face which I saw once and could not meet again. She was in her highest mood. Then I went out early for a walk, and when I came back we sat in different rooms for the most part. There was such a thrill in the air that our only conversation was in her most abrupt and incisive manner. She was knitting, I believe, and as for me I dallied with a book. I heard her walking to and fro, and the door being wide open now, she went out and paced the front walk to the gate as if she walked a quarter-deck.

It is very solemn to sit waiting for the great events of life—most of us have done it again and again—to be expectant of life or expectant of death gives one the same feeling.

But at the last Mrs. Todd came quickly back from the gate, and standing in the sunshine at the door, she beckoned me as if she were a sibyl.

"I thought you comprehended everything the day you was up there," she added with a little more patience in her tone, but I felt that she thought I had lost instead of gained since we parted the autumn before.

"William's made this pretext o' goin' fishin' for the last time. 'Twouldn't done to take notice, 'twould scared him to death! but there never was nobody took less comfort out o' forty years courtin'. No, he won't have to make no further pretexts," said Mrs. Todd, with an air of triumph.

"Did you know where he was going that day?" I asked with a sudden burst of admiration at such discernment.

"I did!" replied Mrs. Todd grandly.

"Oh! but that pennyroyal lotion," I indignantly protested, remembering that under pretext of mosquitoes she had besmeared the poor lover in an awful way—why, it was outrageous! Medea[1] could not have been more conscious of high ultimate purposes.

"Darlin'," said Mrs. Todd, in the excitement of my arrival and the great concerns of marriage, "he's got a beautiful shaped face, and they pison him very unusual—you wouldn't have had him present himself to his lady all lop-sided with a mosquito-bite? Once when we was young I rode up with him, and they set upon him in concert the minute we entered the woods." She stood before me reproachfully, and I was conscious of deserved rebuke.

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1 See note 1, p. 164.

"Yes, you've come just in the nick of time to advise me about a bunnit. They say large bows on top is liable to be worn."

IV.

The period of waiting was one of direct contrast to these high moments of recognition. The very slowness of the morning hours wasted that sense of excitement with which we had begun the day. Mrs. Todd came down from the mount[1] where her face had shone so bright, to the cares of common life, and some acquaintances from Black Island for whom she had little natural preference or liking came, bringing a poor, sickly child to get medical advice. They were noisy women with harsh, clamorous voices, and they stayed a long time. I heard the clink of teacups, however, and could detect no impatience in the tones of Mrs. Todd's voice; but when they were at last going away, she did not linger unduly over her leave-taking, and returned to me to explain that they were people she had never liked, and they had made an excuse of a friendly visit to save their doctor's bill; but she pitied the poor little child, and knew beside that the doctor was away.

"I had to give 'em the remedies right out," she told me; "they wouldn't have bought a cent's worth o' drugs down to the store for that dwindlin' thing. She needed feedin' up, and I don't expect she gets milk enough; they're great butter-makers down to Black Island, 'tis excellent pasturage, but they use no milk themselves, and their butter is heavy laden with salt to make weight, so that you'd think all their ideas come down from Sodom."[2]

She was very indignant and very wistful about the pale little girl. "I wish they'd let me kept her," she said. "I kind of advised it, and her eyes was so wishful in that pinched face when she heard me, so that I could see what was the matter with her, but they said she wa'n't prepared. Prepared!" And Mrs. Todd snuffed like an offended war-horse, and departed; but I could hear her still grumbling and talking to herself in high dudgeon an hour afterward.

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1 A reference to Exodus 34:29: "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him."

2 Deuteronomy 29:23: "And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."

At the end of that time her arch enemy, Mari' Harris, appeared at the side-door with a gingham handkerchief over her head. She was always on hand for the news, and made some formal excuse for her presence,—she wished to borrow the weekly paper. Captain Littlepage, whose housekeeper she was, had taken it from the post-office in the morning, but had forgotten, being of failing memory, what he had done with it.

"How is the poor old gentleman?" asked Mrs. Todd with solicitude, ignoring the present errand of Maria and all her concerns.

I had spoken the evening before of intended visits to Captain Littlepage and Elijah Tilley, and I now heard Mrs. Todd repeating my inquiries and intentions, and fending off with unusual volubility of her own the curious questions that were sure to come. But at last Maria Harris secured an opportunity and boldly inquired if she had not seen William ashore early that morning.

"I don't say he wasn't," replied Mrs. Todd; "Thu'sday's a very usual day with him to come ashore."

"He was all dressed up," insisted Maria—she really had no sense of propriety. "I didn't know but they was going to be married?"

Mrs. Todd did not reply. I recognized from the sounds that reached me that she had retired to the fastnesses of the kitchen-closet and was clattering the tins.

"I expect they'll marry soon anyway," continued the visitor.

"I expect they will if they want to," answered Mrs. Todd. "I don't know nothin' 't all about it; that's what folks say." And presently the gingham handkerchief retreated past my window.

"I routed her, horse and foot,"[1] said Mrs. Todd proudly, coming at once to stand at my door. "Who's coming now?" as two figures passed inward bound to the kitchen.

They were Mrs. Begg and Johnny Bowden's mother, who were favorites, and were received with Mrs. Todd's usual civilities. Then one of the Mrs. Caplins came with a cup in hand to borrow yeast. On one pretext or another nearly all our acquaintances came to satisfy themselves of the facts, and see what Mrs. Todd would impart about the wedding. But she firmly avoided the subject through the length of every call and errand, and answered the final leading question of each curious guest with her non-committal phrase, "I don't know nothin' 't all about it; that's what folks say!"

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1 A decisive defeat in that both cavalry and foot soldiers are forced to abandon the field of battle.

She had just repeated this for the fourth or fifth time and shut the door upon the last comers, when we met in the little front entry. Mrs. Todd was not in a bad temper, but highly amused. "I've been havin' all sorts o' social privileges, you may have observed. They didn't seem to consider that if they could only hold out till afternoon they'd know as much as I did. There wa'n't but one o' the whole sixteen that showed real interest, the rest demeaned themselves to ask out o' cheap curiosity; no, there wa'n't but one showed any real feelin'."

"Miss Maria Harris you mean?" and Mrs. Todd laughed.

"Certain, dear," she agreed, "how you do understand poor human natur'!"

A short distance down the hilly street stood a narrow house that was newly painted white. It blinded one's eyes to catch the reflection of the sun. It was the house of the minister, and a wagon had just stopped before it; a man was helping a woman to alight, and they stood side by side for a moment, while Johnny Bowden appeared as if by magic, and climbed to the wagon-seat. Then they went into the house and shut the door. Mrs. Todd and I stood close together and watched; the tears were running down her cheeks. I watched Johnny Bowden, who made light of so great a moment by so handling the whip that the old white Caplin horse started up from time to time and was inexorably stopped as if he had some idea of running away. There was something in the back of the wagon which now and then claimed the boy's attention; he leaned over as if there were something very precious left in his charge; perhaps it was only Esther's little trunk going to its new home.

At last the door of the parsonage opened, and two figures came out. The minister followed them and stood in the doorway, delaying them with parting words; he could not have thought it was a time for admonition.

"He's all alone; his wife's up to Portland to her sister's," said Mrs. Todd, in a matter-of-fact voice. "She's a nice woman, but she might ha' talked too much. There! see, they're comin' here. I didn't know how 'twould be. Yes, they're comin' up to see us before they go home. I declare, if William ain't lookin' just like a king!"

Mrs. Todd took one step forward, and we stood and waited. The happy pair came walking up the street, Johnny Bowden driving ahead. I heard a plaintive little cry from time to time to which in the excitement of the moment I had not stopped to listen; but when William and Esther had come and shaken hands

with Mrs. Todd and then with me, all in silence, Esther stepped quickly to the back of the wagon, and unfastening some cords returned to us carrying a little white lamb. She gave a shy glance at William as she fondled it and held it to her heart, and then, still silent, we went into the house together. The lamb had stopped bleating. It was lovely to see Esther carry it in her arms.

When we got into the house, all the repression of Mrs. Todd's usual manner was swept away by her flood of feeling. She took Esther's thin figure, lamb and all, to her heart and held her there, kissing her as she might have kissed a child, and then held out her hand to William and they gave each other the kiss of peace.[1] This was so moving, so tender, so free from their usual fetters of self-consciousness, that Esther and I could not help giving each other a happy glance of comprehension. I never saw a young bride half so touching in her happiness as Esther was that day of her wedding. We took the cake and wine of the marriage feast together, always in silence, like a true sacrament, and then to my astonishment I found that sympathy and public interest in so great an occasion were going to have their way. I shrank from the thought of William's possible sufferings, but he welcomed both the first group of neighbors and the last with heartiness; and when at last they had gone, for there were thoughtless loiterers in Dunnet Landing, I made ready with eager zeal and walked with William and Esther to the water-side. It was only a little way, and kind faces nodded reassuringly from the windows, while kind voices spoke from the doors. Esther carried the lamb on one arm; she had found time to tell me that its mother had died that morning and she could not bring herself to the thought of leaving it behind. She kept the other hand on William's arm until we reached the landing. Then he shook hands with me, and looked me full in the face to be sure I understood how happy he was, and stepping into the boat held out his arms to Esther—at last she was his own.

I watched him make a nest for the lamb out of an old sea-cloak at Esther's feet, and then he wrapped her own shawl round her shoulders, and finding a pin in the lapel of his Sunday coat he pinned it for her. She looked at him fondly while he did this, and then glanced up at us, a pretty, girlish color brightening her cheeks.

We stood there together and watched them go far out into the bay. The sunshine of the May day was low now, but there was a

1 Among Christians, a greeting signifying love.

steady breeze, and the boat moved well.

"Mother'll be watching for them," said Mrs. Todd. "Yes, mother'll be watching all day, and waiting. She'll be so happy to have Esther come."

We went home together up the hill, and Mrs. Todd said nothing more; but we held each other's hand all the way.

Appendix A: Before The Country of the Pointed Firs*: Precursors and Influences*

[*The Country of the Pointed Firs* is a text that evolved from Jewett's early artistic efforts, most notably her 1877 novel, *Deephaven*, in which two young women on holiday visit a seaside New England village. Though different from the self-reflective and mature narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Helen Denis, the twenty-four-year-old narrator of *Deephaven*, along with her friend Kate Lancaster, is an open-hearted, adroit observer of the village folk and the village life she encounters. The chapter from *Deephaven* selected for this text shows Jewett as a young writer working out the dynamic between outside observers and the elderly, independent, and wholly plainspoken characters who populate both *Deephaven* and, later, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Written just three years before she begins to develop the later novel, Jewett's 1893 Preface to *Deephaven* provides a glimpse into a maturing writer's self-assessment about an approach, method, and subject that she will refine and perfect in her 1896 masterpiece. The chapter from *Deephaven* is based upon the 1900, twenty-seventh impression, Houghton, Mifflin and Company reprint of the 1877 edition.]

1. Sarah Orne Jewett, Preface to *Deephaven* (1893)

The short lifetime of this little book has seen great changes in the conditions of provincial life in New England. Twenty years ago, or a little more, the two heroines whose simple adventures are here described might well have served as types of those pioneers who were already on the eager quest for rural pleasures. Twenty years ago, our fast-growing New England cities, which had so lately been but large towns, full of green gardens and quiet neighborhoods, were just beginning to be overcrowded and uncomfortable in summer. The steady inflow of immigration, and the way in which these cities had drawn to themselves, like masses of quicksilver, much of the best life of the remotest villages, had made necessary a reflex current that set countryward in summer. This presently showed itself to be of unsuspected force and significance: it meant something more than the instinct for green fields and hills and the seashore; crowded towns and the open country were to be brought together in new association and dependence upon each other. It appeared as if a second Harvey had discovered a new and

national circulation of vitality[1] along the fast-multiplying railroads that spun their webs to bind together men who had once lived far apart. The civil war,[2] which had given so many citizens of the North their first journey and first knowledge of the world outside their native parishes; the fashion set before the war by those gay Southerners who for the most part filled the few mountain and seashore hotels of the North; the increase of wealth, and of the number of persons who had houses in town and country both,—all these causes brought about great and almost sudden changes in rustic life. Old farmhouses opened their doors to the cheerful gayety of summer; the old jokes about the respective aggressions and ignorances of city and country cousins gave place to new compliments between the summer boarder and his rustic host. It began to appear that neither men nor women of the great towns were any longer stayers-at-home according to the Scripture admonition.[3]

The young writer of these Deephaven sketches was possessed by a dark fear that townspeople and country people would never understand one another, or learn to profit by their new relationship. She may have had the unconscious desire to make some sort of explanation to those who still expected to find the caricatured Yankee of fiction, striped trousers, bell-crowned hat, and all, driving his steady horses along the shady roads. It seemed not altogether reasonable when timid ladies mistook a selectman[4] for a tramp, because he happened to be crossing a field in his shirt sleeves. At the same time, she was sensible of grave wrong and misunderstanding when these same timid ladies were regarded with suspicion, and their kindnesses were believed to come from pride and patronage. There is a noble saying of Plato that the best thing that can be done for the people of a state is to make them acquainted with one another.[5] It was, happily, in the writer's childhood that Mrs.

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1 English physician William Harvey (1578-1657) was the first to argue, in *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (An Anatomical Exercise on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals, 1628), that blood was pumped around the body by the heart before returning to the heart and being re-circulated in a closed system.

2 The United States Civil War, 1861-65.

3 Paul's epistle in Titus 2:5 admonishes women "To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands."

4 A member of an executive council in New England towns responsible for the day-to-day operations of town government.

5 From Plato's *Laws*, Book V (360 BCE): "for there is no greater good in a state than that the citizens should be known to one another."

Stowe[1] had written of those who dwelt along the wooded seacoast and by the decaying, shipless harbors of Maine.[2] The first chapters of *The Pearl of Orr's Island* gave the younger author of *Deephaven* to see with new eyes, and to follow eagerly the old shore paths from one gray, weather-beaten house to another where Genius pointed her the way.

In those days, if one had just passed her twentieth year, it was easy to be much disturbed by the sad discovery that certain phases of provincial life were fast waning in New England. Small and old-fashioned towns, of which Deephaven may, by the reader's courtesy, stand as a type, were no longer almost self-subsistent, as in earlier times; and while it was impossible to estimate the value of that wider life that was flowing in from the great springs, many a mournful villager felt the anxiety that came with these years of change. Tradition and time-honored custom were to be swept away together by the irresistible current. Character and architecture seemed to lose individuality and distinction. The new riches of the country were seldom very well spent in those days; the money that the tourist or summer citizen left behind him was apt to be used to sweep away the quaint houses, the roadside thicket, the shady woodland, that had lured him first; and the well-filled purses that were scattered in our country's first great triumphal impulse of prosperity often came into the hands of people who hastened to spoil instead of to mend the best things that their village held. It will remain for later generations to make amends for the sad use of riches after the war, for our injury of what we inherited, for the irreparable loss of certain ancient buildings which would have been twice as interesting in the next century as we are just beginning to be wise enough to think them in this.

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1 New England author and ardent abolitionist, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96), is best known for her famous anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, to which Jewett refers in the Preface and which was influential in the construction of both *Deephaven* and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, was published in 1862.

2 The decline of the New England shipping industry was a result of the war between England and France (1803-14) that was subsumed within the broader Napoleonic Wars. *The Embargo Act* of 1807 was a series of laws passed by Congress during 1807-08 designed to redress hostile attacks on American ships by both the British and French. These new laws stipulated that no American vessels could land in any foreign port unless authorized by the President (who was then Thomas Jefferson, in his second term of office), and that all US ships had to post a bond twice the value of their ship and cargo. Though many sailors ignored these laws, the effect on New England shipping was swift and severe, resulting in significant unemployment and an economic depression from which the shipping industry never recovered.

That all the individuality and quaint personal characteristics of rural New England were so easily swept away, or are even now dying out, we can refuse to believe. It appears, even, that they are better nourished and shine brighter by contrast than in former years. In rustic neighborhoods there will always be those whom George Sand had in mind when she wrote her delightful preface for *Légendes Rustiques:* "Le paysan est donc, si l'on peut ainsi dire, le seul historien qui nous reste des temps antehistorique. Honneur et profit intellectuel à qui se consacrerait à la recherche de ses traditions merveilleuses de chaque hameau qui rassemblées ou groupées, comparées entre elles et minutieusement disséquées, jetteraient peut-être de grandes lueurs sur la nuit profonde des âges primitifs."[1] There will also exist that other class of country people who preserve the best traditions of culture and of manners, from some divine inborn instinct toward what is simplest and best and purest, who know the best because they themselves are of kin to it. It is as hard to be just to our contemporaries as it is easy to borrow enchantment in looking at the figures of the past; but while the Judges and Governors and grand ladies of old Deephaven are being lamented, we must not forget to observe that it is Miss Carew and Miss Lorimer[2] who lament them, and who insist that there are no representatives of the ancient charm and dignity of their beloved town. Human nature is the same the world over, provincial and rustic influences must ever produce much the same effects upon character, and town life will ever have in its gift the spirit of the present, while it may take again from the quiet of hills and fields and the conservatism of country hearts a gift from the spirit of the past.

In the Preface to the first edition of *Deephaven* it was explained that Deephaven was not to be found on the map of New England under another name, and that the characters were seldom drawn from life. It was often asserted to the contrary, while the separate chapters were being published from time to time in the *Atlantic Monthly,* and made certain where the town really was, and the true names of its citizens and pew-holders. Therefore it appeared there were already many

1 "One could say that the peasant is the only historian we have left from the times that predate history. Honor and intellectual profit should be awarded to the one who would devote himself to the research of the marvelous traditions of each hamlet, which, gathered or grouped, and compared with one another and thoroughly dissected, would perhaps throw great light over the profound night of primitive ages." From *Légendes Rustiques* (1858) by George Sand (1804-76), the pen name of Aurore Dupin Dudevant, French feminist and novelist. [Editor's translation]

2 Honora Carew and Miss Rebecca Lorimer are two of the elderly citizens of Deephaven.

"places in America" not "few," that were "touched with the hue of decay." Portsmouth and York and Wells, which were known to the author, Fairhaven and other seacoast towns, which were unknown, were spoken of as the originals of this fictitious village which still exists only in the mind.[1] Strangely enough, the Atlantic Ocean always seems to lie to the west of it rather than to the east, and the landscape generally takes its own way and furnishes impossible landmarks and impressions to the one person who can see it clearly and in large. Some early knowledge of the secret found later in the delightful story of *Peter Ibbetson*[2] appears to have been foreseen, but a lack of experience and a limited knowledge of the wide world outside forced the imaginer of Deephaven to build her dear town of such restricted materials as lay within her grasp. The landscape itself is always familiar to her thought, and far more real than many others which have been seen since with preoccupied or tired eyes.

The writer frankly confesses that the greater part of any value which these sketches may possess is in their youthfulness. There are sentences which make her feel as if she were the grandmother of the author of *Deephaven* and her heroines, those "two young ladies of virtue and honour, bearing an inviolable friendship for each other," as two others, less fortunate, are described in the preface to *Clarissa Harlowe*.[3] She begs her readers to smile with her over those sentences as they are found not seldom along the pages, and so the callow wings of what thought itself to be wisdom and the childish soul of sentiment will still be happy and untroubled.

In a curious personal sense the author repeats her attempt to explain the past and the present to each other. This little book will remind some of those friends who read it first of "—light that lit the olden days;" but there are kind eyes, unknown then, that are very dear now, and to these the pages will be new. This Preface must end as the first Preface ended, with a dedication to my father and mother my two best friends—and then to all my other friends whose names I say to myself lovingly, though I do not write them here.
S.O.J.

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1 Portsmouth, New Hampshire; York and Wells are coastal towns in southern Maine; Fairhaven, Massachusetts is also located on the coast, fifty miles south of Boston.

2 *Peter Ibbetson* is an 1891 novel by British novelist George du Maurier (1834-96).

3 Clarissa Harlowe is the doomed and tragic heroine of Samuel Richardson's (1689-1761) epistolary novel, *Clarissa, Or The History of a Young Lady* (1748). The "two others, less fortunate" are Clarissa Harlowe and her friend, Anna Howe.

2. Sarah Orne Jewett, Chapter Five, "The Captains," from *Deephaven* (1893)

I should consider my account of Deephaven society incomplete if I did not tell you something of the ancient mariners,[1] who may be found every pleasant morning sunning themselves like turtles on one of the wharves. Sometimes there was a considerable group of them, but the less constant members of the club were older than the rest, and the epidemics of rheumatism in town were sadly frequent. We found that it was etiquette to call them each captain, but I think some of the Deephaven men took the title by brevet[2] upon arriving at a proper age.

They sat close together because so many of them were deaf, and when we were lucky enough to overhear the conversation, it seemed to concern their adventures at sea, or the freight carried out by the Sea Duck, the Ocean Rover, or some other Deephaven ship,—the particulars of the voyage and its disasters and successes being as familiar as the wanderings of the children of Israel[3] to an old parson. There were sometimes violent altercations when the captains differed as to the tonnage of some craft that had been a prey to the winds and waves, dry-rot, or barnacles fifty years before. The old fellows puffed away at little black pipes with short stems, and otherwise consumed tobacco in fabulous quantities. It is needless to say that they gave an immense deal of attention to the weather. We used to wish we could join this agreeable company, but we found that the appearance of an outsider caused a disapproving silence, and that the meeting was evidently not to be interfered with. Once we were impertinent enough to hide ourselves for a while just round the corner of the warehouse, but we were afraid or ashamed to try it again, though the conversation was inconceivably edifying. Captain Isaac Horn, the eldest and the wisest of all, was discoursing upon some cloth he had purchased once in Bristol, which the shop-keeper delayed sending until just as they were ready to weigh anchor.

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1 *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797-98) is the longest major poem by English Romantic writer Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834); it was published in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798.

2 A promotion or an assignment to a higher position.

3 Numbers 33:1: "These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron." The actual date of this departure from Egypt is the source of significant debate. Many biblical scholars cite the Exodus as occurring sometime during the fifteenth century BCE, at approximately 1440, while archaeologists and many historians argue for a thirteenth-century date, falling somewhere between 1210 and 1290 BCE.

"I happened to take a look at that cloth," said the captain, in a loud droning voice, "and as quick as I got sight of it, I spoke onpleasant of that swindling English fellow, and the crew, they stood back. I was dreadful high-tempered in them days, mind ye; and I had the gig manned. We was out in the stream, just ready to sail. 'Twas no use waiting any longer for the wind to change, and we was going north-about. I went ashore, and when I walks into his shop ye never see a creatur' so wilted. Ye see the miser'ble sculpin[1] thought I'd never stop to open the goods, an' it was a chance I did, mind ye! 'Lor,' says, he, grinning and turning the color of a biled lobster, 'I s'posed ye were a standing out to sea by this time,' 'No,' says I, 'and I've got my men out here on the quay a landing that cloth o' yourn, and if you don't send just what I bought and paid for down there to go back in the gig within fifteen minutes, I'll take ye by the collar and drop ye into the dock.' I was twice the size of him, mind ye, and master strong. 'Don't ye like it?' says he, edging round; 'I'll change it for ye, then.' Ter'ble perlite he was. 'Like it?' says I, 'it looks as if it were built of dog's hair and divil's wool, kicked together by spiders; and it's coarser than Irish frieze;[2] three threads to an *armful*,' says I."

This was evidently one of the captain's favorite stories, for we heard an approving grumble from the audience.

In the course of a walk inland we made a new acquaintance, Captain Lant, whom we had noticed at church, and who sometimes joined the company on the wharf. We had been walking through the woods, and coming out to his fields we went on to the house for some water. There was no one at home but the captain, who told us cheerfully that he should be pleased to serve us, though his women-folks had gone off to a funeral, the other side of the P'int. He brought out a pitcherful of milk, and after we had drunk some, we all sat down together in the shade. The captain brought an old flag-bottomed chair[3] from the woodhouse, and sat down facing Kate and me, with an air of certainty that he was going to hear something new and make some desirable new acquaintances, and also that he could tell something it would be worth our while to hear. He looked more and more like a well-to-do old English sparrow, and chippered faster and faster.

"Queer ye should know I'm a sailor so quick, why, I've been a-farming it this twenty years; have to go down to the shore and take a day's fishing every hand's turn, though, to keep the old hulk clear of

1 A bottom-feeder fish with sharp spines instead of scales that can live for several hours out of water if kept moist.

2 A heavy, coarse woolen cloth that protects against rain and bitter cold.

3 A chair made from rushes (also called flags), the pliable stems of freshwater marsh plants, woven together into a seat.

barnacles. There! I do wish I lived nigher the shore, where I could see the folks I know, and talk about what's been a-goin' on. You don't know anything about it, you don't; but it's tryin' to a man to be called 'old Cap'n Lant,' and, so to speak, be forgot when there's anything stirring, and be called gran'ther by clumsy creatur's goin' on fifty and sixty, who can't do no more work to-day than I can; an' then the women-folks keeps a-tellin' me to be keerful and not fall, and as how I'm too old to go out fishing; and when they want to be soft-spoken, they say as how they don't see as I fail, and how wonderful I keep my hearin'. I never did want to farm it, but 'she' always took it to heart when I was off on a v'y'ge, and this farm and some consider'ble means besides come to her from her brother, and they all sot to and give me no peace of mind till I sold out my share of the Ann Eliza and come ashore for good. I did keep an eighth of the Pactolus,[1] and I was ship's husband[2] for a long spell, but she never was heard from on her last voyage to Singapore. I was the lonesomest man, when I first come ashore, that ever you see. Well, you are master hands to walk, if you come way up from the Brandon house. I wish the women was at home. Know Miss Brandon? Why, yes; and I remember all her brothers and sisters, and her father and mother. I can see 'em now coming into meeting, proud as Lucifer[3] and straight as a mast, every one of 'em. Miss Katharine, she always had her butter from this very farm. Some of the folks used to go down every Saturday, and my wife, she's been in the house a hundred times, I s'pose. So you are Hathaway Brandon's grand-daughter?" (To Kate); "why, he and I have been out fishing together many's the time,—he and Chantrey, his next younger brother. Henry, he was a disapp'intment; he went to furrin parts and turned out a Catholic priest, I s'pose you've heard? I never was so set a'gin Mr. Henry as some folks was. He was the pleasantest spoken of the whole on 'em. You do look like the Brandons; you really favor 'em consider'ble. Well, I'm pleased to see ye, I'm sure."

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1 In this context, the name of a ship. Pactolus is a river near the Aegean coast of Turkey, reputed to be the river in which King Midas washed off the curse of his golden touch.

2 An agent representing the owners of a ship, who manages its expenses and receipts.

3 Haughty and overbearing. Lucifer (literally "light bearing") is the name given in Isaiah 4:12 to Nebuchadnezzar, the ruined king of Babylon: "Take up this proverb against the King of Babylon, and say, ... How art thou fallen, from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (1667), refers to Lucifer as the name of Satan before the Fall.

We asked him many questions about the old people, and found he knew all the family histories and told them with great satisfaction. We found he had his pet stories, and it must have been gratifying to have an entirely new and fresh audience. He was adroit in leading the conversation around to a point where the stories would come in appropriately, and we helped him as much as possible. In a small neighborhood all the people know each other's stories and experiences by heart, and I have no doubt the old captain had been snubbed many times on beginning a favorite anecdote. There was a story which he told us that first day, which he assured us was strictly true, and it is certainly a remarkable instance of the influence of one mind upon another at a distance. It seems to me worth preserving, at any rate; and as we heard it from the old man, with his solemn voice and serious expression and quaint gestures, it was singularly impressive.

"When I was a youngster," said Captain Lant, "I was an orphan, and I was bound[1] out to old Mr. Peletiah Daw's folks, over on the Ridge Road. It was in the time of the last war, and he had a nephew, Ben Dighton, a dreadful high-strung, wild fellow, who had gone off on a privateer.[2] The old man he set everything by Ben; he would disoblige his own boys any day to please him. This was in his latter days, and he used to have spells of wandering and being out of his head; and he used to call for Ben and talk sort of foolish about him, till they would tell him to stop. Ben never did a stroke of work for him, either, but he was a handsome fellow, and had a way with him when he was good-natured. One night old Peletiah had been very bad all day and was getting quieted down, and it was after supper; we sat round in the kitchen, and he lay in the bedroom opening out. There were some pitch-knots[3] blazing, and the light shone in on the bed, and all of a sudden something made me look up and look in; and there was the old man setting up straight, with his eyes shining at me like a cat's. 'Stop 'em!' says he; *'stop 'em!'* and his two sons run in then to catch hold of him, for they thought he was beginning with one of his wild spells; but he fell back on the bed and began to cry like a baby. 'O, dear me,' says he, 'they've hung him,—hung him right up to the yard-arm![4] O, they oughtn't to have done it; cut him down quick! he didn't think; he means well, Ben does; he was hasty. O my God, I can't bear to see him

1 To be indentured to or contracted into the service of another for a specified period.

2 A privately owned ship authorized by a government during wartime to attack and capture enemy vessels.

3 Knots of pine wood that are heavy with resin and so burn strongly; they were often used in place of candles.

4 Yardarms are the timbers from which sails are hung on sailing ships.

swing round by the neck! It's poor Ben hung up to the yard-arm. Let me alone, I say!' Andrew and Moses, they were holding him with all their might, and they were both hearty men, but he 'most got away from them once or twice, and he screeched and howled like a mad creatur', and then he would cry again like a child. He was worn out after a while and lay back quiet, and said over and over, 'Poor Ben!' and 'hung at the yard-arm'; and he told the neighbors next day, but nobody noticed him much, and he seemed to forget it as his mind come back. All that summer he was miser'ble, and towards cold weather he failed right along, though he had been a master strong man in his day, and his timbers held together well. Along late in the fall he had taken to his bed, and one day there came to the house a fellow named Sim Decker, a reckless fellow he was too, who had gone out in the same ship with Ben. He pulled a long face when he came in, and said he had brought bad news. They had been taken prisoner and carried into port and put in jail, and Ben Dighton had got a fever there and died.

"'You lie!' says the old man from the bedroom, speaking as loud and f'erce as ever you heard. 'They hung him to the yard-arm!'

"'Don't mind him,' says Andrew; 'he's wandering-like, and he had a bad dream along back in the spring; I s'posed he'd forgotten it.' But the Decker fellow he turned pale, and kept talking crooked while he listened to old Peletiah a-scolding to himself. He answered the questions the women-folks asked him,—they took on a good deal,—but pretty soon he got up and winked to me and Andrew, and we went out in the yard. He began to swear, and then says he, 'When did the old man have his dream?' Andrew couldn't remember, but I knew it was the night before he sold the gray colt, and that was the 24th of April.

"'Well,' says Sim Decker, 'on the twenty-third day of April Ben Dighton was hung to the yard-arm, and I see 'em do it, Lord help him! I didn't mean to tell the women, and I s'posed you'd never know, for I'm all the one of the ship's company you're ever likely to see. We were taken prisoner, and Ben was mad as fire, and they were scared of him and chained him to the deck; and while he was sulking there, a little parrot of a midshipman come up and grinned at him, and snapped his fingers in his face; and Ben lifted his hands with the heavy irons and sprung at him like a tiger, and the boy dropped dead as a stone; and they put the bight[1] of a rope round Ben's neck and slung him right up to the yard-arm, and there he swung back and forth until as soon as we dared one of us clim' up and cut the rope and let him go over the

1 A slack part or loop in a rope.

ship's side; and they put us in irons for that, curse 'em! How did that old man in there know, and he bedridden here, nigh upon three thousand miles off?' says he. But I guess there wasn't any of us could tell him," said Captain Lant in conclusion. "It's something I never could account for, but it's true as truth. I've known more such cases; some folks laughs at me for believing 'em,—'the cap'n's yarns,' they calls 'em,—but if you'll notice, everybody's got some yarn of that kind they do believe, if they won't believe yours. And there's a good deal happens in the world that's myster'ous. Now there was Widder Oliver Pinkham, over to the P'int, told me with her own lips that she—" But just here we saw the captain's expression alter suddenly, and looked around to see a wagon coming up the lane. We immediately said we must go home, for it was growing late, but asked permission to come again and hear the Widow Oliver Pinkham story. We stopped, however, to see "the women-folks," and afterward became so intimate with them that we were invited to spend the afternoon and take tea, which invitation we accepted with great pride. We went out fishing, also, with the captain and "Danny," of whom I will tell you presently. I often think of Captain Lant in the winter, for he told Kate once that he "felt master old in winter to what he did in summer." He likes reading, fortunately, and we had a letter from him, not long ago, acknowledging the receipt of some books of travel by land and water which we had luckily thought to send him. He gave the latitude and longitude of Deephaven at the beginning of this letter, and signed himself, "Respectfully yours with esteem, Jacob Lant (condemned as unseaworthy)."

3. Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Aunt Roxy and Aunt Ruey," Chapter Four of *The Pearl of Orr's Island: A Story of the Coast of Maine* (1862)

[Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1862 novel, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, was first published as a serial in the New York *Independent* from January 1861 to April 1862. The novel is set in an island village in coastal mid-Maine, an area that Stowe had visited while her husband was a professor at Bowdoin College in nearby Brunswick, Maine. Featuring strong women, grumpy fisherman, village gossips, and sea captains, Jewett cites "The first chapters of *The Pearl of Orr's Island*" in her Preface to the 1893 edition of *Deephaven* as inspiring her "to see with new eyes" the life of the New England coast and its village inhabitants. Four years earlier, she had written to Annie Fields that "I have been reading the beginning of 'The Pearl of Orr's Island' and finding it just as clear and perfectly original and strong as it seemed to me in my

thirteenth or fourteenth year, when I read it first. I never shall forget the exquisite flavor and reality of delight that it gave me. I do so long to read it with you. It is classical-historical—anything you like to say, if you can give it high praise enough. I haven't read it for ten years at least, but *there it is!*" (Sunday 5 July 1889). In Stowe's representation of the salty, sage and down-to-earth Aunt Roxy as a "sybil," one can glean hints of Almira Todd, the formidable widow, herbalist, and storyteller who befriends the unnamed narrator that Jewett will create three decades later in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. This selection is drawn from the 1862 edition of *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 15-24.]

The sea lay like an unbroken mirror all around the pine-girt, lonely shores of Orr's Island. Tall, kingly spruces wore their regal crowns of cones high in air, sparkling with diamonds of clear exuded gum; vast old hemlocks of primeval growth stood darkling in their forest shadows, their branches hung with long hoary moss; while feathery larches, turned to brilliant gold by autumn frosts, lighted up the darker shadows of the evergreens. It was one of those hazy, calm, dissolving days of Indian summer, when everything is so quiet that the faintest kiss of the wave on the beach can be heard, and white clouds seem to faint into the blue of the sky, and soft swathing bands of violet vapor make all earth look dreamy, and give to the sharp, clearcut outlines of the northern landscape all those mysteries of light and shade which impart such tenderness to Italian scenery.

The funeral was over; the tread of many feet, bearing the heavy burden of two broken lives, had been to the lonely graveyard, and had come back again,—each footstep lighter and more unconstrained as each one went his way from the great old tragedy of Death to the common cheerful walks of Life.

The solemn black clock stood swaying with its eternal "tick-tock, tick-tock," in the kitchen of the brown house on Orr's Island. There was there that sense of a stillness that can be felt,—such as settles down on a dwelling when any of its inmates have passed through its doors for the last time, to go whence they shall not return. The best room was shut up and darkened, with only so much light as could fall through a little heart-shaped hole in the window-shutter,—for except on solemn visits, or prayer meetings, or weddings, or funerals, that room formed no part of the daily family scenery.

The kitchen was clean and ample, with a great open fireplace and wide stone hearth, and oven on one side, and rows of old-fashioned splint-bottomed chairs against the wall. A table scoured to snowy whiteness, and a little work-stand whereon lay the Bible, the "Mis-

sionary Herald"[1] and the "Weekly Christian Mirror,"[2] before named, formed the principal furniture. One feature, however, must not be forgotten,—a great sea-chest, which had been the companion of Zephaniah through all the countries of the earth. Old, and battered, and unsightly it looked, yet report said that there was good store within of that which men for the most part respect more than anything else; and, indeed, it proved often when a deed of grace was to be done,—when a woman was suddenly made a widow in a coast gale, or a fishing-smack[3] was run down in the fogs off the banks, leaving in some neighboring cottage a family of orphans,—in all such cases, the opening of this sea-chest was an event of good omen to the bereaved; for Zephaniah had a large heart and a large hand, and was apt to take it out full of silver dollars when once it went in. So the ark of the covenant[4] could not have been looked on with more reverence than the neighbors usually showed to Captain Pennel's sea-chest.

The afternoon sun is shining in a square of light through the open kitchen-door, whence one dreamily disposed might look far out to sea, and behold ships coming and going in every variety of shape and size.

But Aunt Roxy and Aunt Ruey, who for the present were sole occupants of the premises, were not people of the dreamy kind, and consequently were not gazing off to sea, but attending to very terrestrial matters that in all cases somebody must attend to. The afternoon was warm and balmy, but a few smouldering sticks were kept in the great chimney, and thrust deep into the embers was a mongrel species of snub-nosed tea-pot, which fumed strongly of catnip-tea,[5] a little of which gracious beverage Miss Roxy was preparing in an old-fashioned cracked India china tea-cup, tasting it as she did so with the air of a connoisseur.

Apparently this was for the benefit of a small something in long white clothes, that lay face downward under a little blanket of very blue new flannel, and which something Aunt Roxy, when not other-

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1 *The Missionary Herald* was a nineteenth-century publication of the American Board of Missionaries that contained reports of mission societies abroad as well as a section devoted to domestic matters.

2 *The Weekly Christian Mirror* (1822-99) was a New England Congregationalist newspaper.

3 A fishing vessel that often has a well in it to keep the catch alive.

4 The sacred container that held the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written.

5 Catnip tea is used as a sleeping aid; it is also employed as a remedy in the treatment of tension and anxiety.

wise engaged, constantly patted with a gentle tattoo,[1] in tune to the steady trot of her knee. All babies knew Miss Roxy's tattoo on their backs, and never thought of taking it in ill part. On the contrary, it had a vital and mesmeric[2] effect of sovereign force against colic, and all other disturbers of the nursery; and never was infant known so pressed with those internal troubles which infants cry about, as not speedily to give over and sink to slumber at this soothing appliance.

At a little distance sat Aunt Ruey, with a quantity of black crape strewed on two chairs about her, very busily employed in getting up a mourning-bonnet, at which she snipped, and clipped, and worked, zealously singing, in a high cracked voice, from time to time, certain verses of a funeral psalm.

Miss Roxy and Miss Ruey Toothacre were two brisk old bodies of the feminine gender and singular number, well known in all the region of Harpswell Neck and Middle Bay, and such was their fame that it had even reached the town of Brunswick, eighteen miles away.

They were of that class of females who might be denominated, in the Old Testament language, "cunning women,"[3]—that is, gifted with an infinite diversity of practical "faculty," which made them an essential requisite in every family for miles and miles around. It was impossible to say what they could not do: they could make dresses, and make shirts and vests and pantaloons, and cut out boys' jackets, and braid straw, and bleach and trim bonnets, and cook and wash, and iron and mend, could upholster and quilt, could nurse all kinds of sicknesses, and in default of a doctor, who was often miles away, were supposed to be infallible medical oracles. Many a human being had been ushered into life under their auspices,—trotted, chirruped in babyhood on their knees, clothed by their handiwork in garments gradually enlarging from year to year, watched by them in the last sickness, and finally arrayed for the long repose by their hands.

These universally useful persons receive among us the title of "aunt" by a sort of general consent, showing the strong ties of relationship which bind them to the whole human family. They are nobody's aunts in particular, but aunts to human nature generally. The idea of restricting their usefulness to any one family, would strike dismay through a whole community. Nobody would be so unprincipled as to think of such a thing as having their services more than a

1 A drum or bugle signal to summon soldiers or sailors to their night quarters.

2 Hypnotic; the term is derived from the name of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815).

3 Jeremiah 9:17: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come."

week or two at most. Your country factotum[1] knows better than anybody else how absurd it would be

"To give to a part what was meant for mankind."[2]

Nobody knew very well the ages of these useful sisters. In that cold, clear, severe climate of the North, the roots of human existence are hard to strike; but, if, once people do take to living, they come in time to a place where they seem never to grow any older, but can always be found, like last year's mullein stalks,[3] upright, dry, and seedy, warranted to last for any length of time.

Miss Roxy Toothacre, who sits trotting the baby, is a tall, thin, angular woman, with sharp black eyes, and hair once black, but now well streaked with gray. These ravages of time, however, were concealed by an ample mohair frisette[4] of glossy blackness woven on each side into a heap of stiff little curls, which pushed up her cap border in rather a bristling and decisive way. In all her movements and personal habits, even to her tone of voice and manner of speaking, Miss Roxy was vigorous, spicy, and decided. Her mind on all subjects was made up, and she spoke generally as one having authority; and who should, if she should not? Was she not a sort of priestess and sibyl[5] in all the most awful straits and mysteries of life? How many births, and weddings, and deaths had come and gone under her jurisdiction? And amid weeping or rejoining, was not Miss Roxy still the master-spirit,—consulted, referred to by all?—was not her word law and precedent? Her younger sister, Miss Ruey, a pliant, cozy, easy-to-be-entreated personage, plump and cushiony, revolved around her as a humble satellite. Miss Roxy looked on Miss Ruey as quite a frisky young thing, though under her ample frisette of carroty hair her head might be seen white with the same snow that had powdered that of her sister. Aunt Ruey had a face much resembling the kind of one you may see, reader,

1 A general servant or person who has many diverse activities or responsibilities.

2 A misquotation from Daniel Webster's speech of 22 February 1832 on the centennial anniversary of George Washington's birthday in which he states that: "Born for his country and for the world, he did not give up to party what was meant for mankind."

3 A mullein is a plant in the figwort family with tall, flowering stems that last for a long time, even in dry soil. Herbalists use them for sore throat, cough, and lung diseases.

4 A fringe of curled, often artificial hair, usually worn on the forehead by a woman.

5 A woman regarded as an oracle or prophet by the ancient Greeks and Romans.

by looking at yourself in the convex side of a silver milk-pitcher. If you try the experiment, this description will need no further amplification.

The two almost always went together, for the variety of talent comprised in their stock could always find employment in the varying wants of a family. While one nursed the sick, the other made clothes for the well; and thus they were always chippering and chatting to each other, like a pair of antiquated house-sparrows, retailing over harmless gossips, and moralizing in that gentle jogtrot[1] which befits serious old women. In fact, they had talked over everything in Nature, and said everything they could think of to each other so often, that the opinions of one were as like those of the other as two sides of a peapod. But as often happens in cases of the sort, this was not because the two were in all respects exactly alike, but because the stronger one had mesmerized the weaker into consent.

Miss Roxy was the master-spirit of the two, and, like the great coining machine of a mint, came down with her own sharp, heavy stamp on every opinion her sister put out. She was matter-of-fact, positive, and declarative to the highest degree, while her sister was naturally inclined to the elegiac and the pathetic, indulging herself in sentimental poetry, and keeping a store thereof in her threadcase, which she had cut from the "Christian Mirror." Miss Roxy sometimes, in her brusque way, popped out observations on life and things, with a droll, hard quaintness that took one's breath a little, yet never failed to have a sharp crystallization of truth,—frosty though it were. She was one of those sensible, practical creatures who tear every veil, and lay their fingers on every spot in pure businesslike good-will; and if we shiver at them at times, as at the first plunge of a cold bath, we confess to an invigorating power in them after all.

"Well, now," said Miss Roxy, giving a decisive push to the tea-pot, which buried it yet deeper in the embers, "ain't it all a strange kind o' providence that this 'ere little thing is left behind so; and then their callin' on her by such a strange, mournful kind of name,—Mara. I thought sure as could be 'twas Mary, till the minister read the passage from Scriptur'.[2] Seems to me it's kind o' odd. I'd call it Maria, or I'd put an Ann on to it. Mara-ann, now, wouldn't sound so strange."

"It's a Scriptur' name, sister," said Aunt Ruey, "and that ought to be enough for us."

"Well, I don't know," said Aunt Roxy. "Now there was Miss Jones down on Mure P'int called her twins Tiglath-Pileser and Shalma-

1 A slow, steady pace, as in a horse's trot.

2 Ruth 1:20: "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

neser,[1]—Scriptur' names both, but I never liked 'em. The boys used to call 'em, Tiggy and Shally, so no mortal could guess they was Scriptur'."

"Well," said Aunt Ruey, drawing a sigh which caused her plump proportions to be agitated in gentle waves, "'t ain't much matter, after all, what they call the little thing, for 't ain't 't all likely it's goin' to live,—cried and worried all night, and kep' a-suckin' my cheek and my night-gown, poor little thing! This 'ere's a baby that 'won't get along without its mother. What Mis' Pennel 's a-goin' to do with it when we is gone, I'm sure I don't know. It comes kind o' hard on old people to be broke o' their rest. If it's goin' to be called home, it's a pity, as I said, it didn't go with its mother"—

"And save the expense of another funeral," said Aunt Roxy. "Now when Mis' Pennel's sister asked her what she was going to do with Naomi's clothes, I couldn't help wonderin' when she said she should keep 'em for the child."

"She had a sight of things, Naomi did," said Aunt Ruey. "Nothin' was never too much for her. I don't believe that Cap'n Pennel ever went to Bath or Portland without havin' it in his mind to bring Naomi somethin'."

"Yes, and she had a faculty of puttin' of 'em on," said Miss Roxy, with a decisive shake of the head. "Naomi was a still girl, but her faculty was uncommon; and I tell you, Ruey, 't ain't everybody hes faculty as hes things."

"The poor Cap'n," said Miss Ruey, "he seemed greatly supported at the funeral, but he's dreadful broke down since. I went into Naomi's room this morning, and there the old man was a-sittin' by her bed, and he had a pair of her shoes in his hand,—you know what a leetle bit of a foot she had. I never saw nothin' look so kind o' solitary as that poor old man did!"

"Well," said Miss Roxy, "she was a master-hand for keepin' things, Naomi was; her drawers is just a sight; she's got all the little presents and things they ever give her since she was a baby, in one drawer. There's a little pair of red shoes there that she had when she wa'n't more 'n five year old. You 'member, Ruey, the Cap'n brought 'em over from Portland when we was to the house a-makin' Mis' Pennel's figured black silk that he brought from Calcutty.[2] You 'member they cost just five and sixpence; but, law! the Cap'n he never grudged the

1 Tiglath-Pileser was the most famous of the monarchs of the first Assyrian empire (about 1110 BCE). After his death the empire fell into decay for two hundred years. The history of David and Solomon falls within this period. He was succeeded by his son, Shalmaneser II, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:3.

2 Calcutta, now Kolkata, India, the capital city in the state of West Bengal.

money when 't was for Naomi. And so she's got all her husband's keepsakes and things just as nice as when he giv' 'em to her."

"It's real affectin'," said Miss Ruey, "I can't all the while help a-thinkin' of the Psalm,

'So fades the lovely blooming flower—
Frail, smiling solace of an hour;
So quick our transient comforts fly,
And pleasure only blooms to die.' [1]

"Yes," said Miss Roxy; "and, Ruey, I was a-thinkin' whether or no it wa'n't best to pack away them things, 'cause Naomi hadn't fixed no baby drawers, and we seem to want some."

"I was kind o' hintin' that to Mis' Pennel this morning," said Ruey, "but she can't seem to want to have 'em touched."

"Well, we may just as well come to such things first as last," said Aunt Roxy; "'cause if the Lord takes our friends, he does take 'em; and we can't lose 'em and have 'em too, and we may as well give right up at first, and done with it, that they are gone, and we've got to do without 'em, and not to be hangin' on to keep things just as they was."

"So I was a-tellin' Mis' Pennel," said Miss Ruey, "but she'll come to it by and by. I wish the baby might live, and kind o' grow up into her mother's place."

"Well," said Miss Roxy, "I wish it might, but there'd be a sight o' trouble fetchin' on it up. Folks can do pretty well with children when they're young and spry, if they do get 'em up nights; but come to grandchildren, it's pretty tough."

"I'm a-thinkin', sister," said Miss Ruey, taking off her spectacles and rubbing her nose thoughtfully, "whether or no cow's milk ain't goin' to be too hearty for it, it's such a pindlin' little thing. Now, Mis' Badger she brought up a seven-months' child, and she told me she gave it nothin' but these 'ere little seed cookies, wet in water, and it throve nicely,—and the seed is good for wind."

"Oh, don't tell me none of Mis' Badger's stories," said Miss Roxy, "I don't believe in 'em. Cows is the Lord's ordinances[2] for bringing up babies that's lost their mothers; it stands to reason they should be,—and babies that can't eat milk, why they can't be fetched up; but babies

1 English poet Anne Steele (1716-78) wrote 144 hymns and 34 versified Psalms that were enormously popular. Her *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* was published in 1760. When Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts published its hymnal in 1808, 59 of its 144 hymns were authored by Anne Steele, who retained her anonymity by writing under a pen name, L.M.

2 A custom or practice established by long use or tradition.

can eat milk, and this un will if it lives, and if it can't it won't live." So saying, Miss Roxy drummed away on the little back of the party in question, authoritatively, as if to pound in a wholesome conviction at the outset.

"I hope," said Miss Ruey, holding up a strip of black crape, and looking through it from end to end so as to test its capabilities, "I hope the Cap'n and Mis' Pennel 'll get some support at the prayer-meetin' this afternoon."

"It's the right place to go to," said Miss Roxy, with decision.

"Mis' Pennel said this mornin' that she was just beat out tryin' to submit; and the more she said, 'Thy will be done,' the more she didn't seem to feel it."

"Them's common feelin's among mourners, Ruey. These 'ere forty years that I've been round nussin', and layin'-out, and tendin' funerals, I've watched people's exercises. People's sometimes supported wonderfully just at the time, and maybe at the funeral; but the three or four weeks after, most everybody, if they's to say what they feel, is unreconciled."

"The Cap'n, he don't say nothin'," said Miss Ruey.

"No, he don't, but he looks it in his eyes," said Miss Roxy; "he's one of the kind o' mourners as takes it deep; that kind don't cry; it's a kind o' dry, deep pain; them 's the worst to get over it,—sometimes they just says nothin', and in about six months they send for you to nuss 'em in consumption or somethin'. Now, Mis' Fennel, she can cry and she can talk,—well, she'll get over it; but he won't get no support unless the Lord reaches right down and lifts him up over the world. I've seen that happen sometimes, and I tell you, Ruey, that sort makes powerful Christians."

At that moment the old pair entered the door. Zephaniah Pennel came and stood quietly by the pillow where the little form was laid, and lifted a corner of the blanket. The tiny head was turned to one side, showing the soft, warm cheek, and the little hand was holding tightly a morsel of the flannel blanket. He stood swallowing hard for a few moments. At last he said, with deep humility, to the wise and mighty woman who held her, "I'll tell you what it is, Miss Roxy, I'll give all there is in my old chest yonder if you'll only make her—live."

Appendix B: Local Color Literature: Nineteenth-Century Formulations and Definitions

[Local color literature, also known as regionalism or regional fiction, rose to prominence during the years after the Civil War and lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century. Championed and regularly published by a series of editors at *Atlantic Monthly*—including James Russell Lowell (1857-61), James T. Fields (1861-71), William Dean Howells (1871-81), Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1881-90), and Horace Scudder (1890-98)—local color fiction was distinguished by characters who spoke in regional dialects and who hailed from rural geographies encompassing the West, the Midwest, the South, and New England. These fictions also self-consciously sought authenticity, in speech, local customs, and in folk traits, thus linking them explicitly with Howells's famous exhortation for a realist literary ethos in his May 1887 "Editor's Study" column in *Harper's Monthly*:

> Let fiction cease to lie about life; let it portray men and women as they are, actuated by the motives and the passions in the measure we all know; let it leave off painting dolls and working them by springs and wires; let it show the different interests in their true proportions; let it forbear to preach pride and revenge, folly and insanity, egotism and prejudice, but frankly own these for what they are, in whatever figures and occasions they appear; let it not put on fine literary airs; let it speak the dialect, the language, that most Americans know—the language of unaffected people everywhere.

For Howells, one whose great contribution to nineteenth-century American literature was his linking regional writing to the project of democracy, the diversity inherent in the astounding multiplicity and difference within "American" experiences made improbable, if not impossible, that any one fiction or novel, no matter how broad, could adequately address anything approximating a "national" experience. This delicate tension between the local and the national in literary representation reflects the desire of an increasingly urban, capitalist America during this period to experience, if only vicariously through fiction, the old-fashioned and potentially disappearing life of close-knit communities and social identities deeply rooted in specific locales whose natural landscapes inexorably shaped the lives of those who remained in these rural enclaves. The powerful pull of this genre can

be witnessed in the fact that, aside from Henry James and Howells himself, every successful writer of the period first established him or herself as a practitioner of the local color story.

The three essays collected in this section all offer arguments that either contextualize United States local color fiction within global literary history, as in the case of Howells, or, as with Garland and Harte, theorize and attempt to situate this literature within an American literary tradition.]

1. William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study" (1887)

[William Dean Howells (1837-1920) was a novelist and literary critic who, in his role as editor at *Atlantic Monthly* (1871-81) and at *Harper's* (1886-92), championed many writers of regional fiction (including Jewett) and used his columns to formulate and propagate his influential theories of American literary realism. A prolific writer and enormously influential critic and editor, between 1860 and 1921 Howells produced thirty-six novels, twelve travel narratives, ten volumes of short stories and sketches, seven volumes of literary criticism, five autobiographies, four volumes of poetry, and two presidential campaign biographies, as well as hundreds of essays, reviews, editorials, and speeches. Throughout his career he also published in sixty-four magazines and nineteen newspapers and wrote eight different serial columns. His best known fictions include: *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), and his critical pieces were collected in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891). In 1904 he was one of the first seven members elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Howells began his "The Editor's Study" columns for *Harper's* in January 1886; the text for this selection is from *Harper's Magazine,* February 1887, 482-86.]

1.

The reader of Miss C.F. Woolson's[1] short stories, lately reprinted in two volumes, must have felt the mastery which she shows in them; and perhaps, pausing from the pathos of "Solomon" or "Willhelmina," or from the fascination of "The South Devil," he may have let his thoughts run to the vast amount of work which other Americans have done in that kind. This work, indeed, is so great in quantity and so excellent in quality that we are tempted to claim a national primacy in

1 The grandneice of James Fenimore Cooper, Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-94) is best known for the two volumes of local color stories—*Castle Nowhere: Lake-Country Sketches* (1875) and *Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches* (1880)—that Howells discusses in this essay.

short-story writing; and we do not easily content ourselves with the belief that we have merely done better in writing short stories than in writing long ones. The rest of mankind might dispute our claim, and our novelists, but for the modesty native in novelists, might refuse our conclusion as injurious. We will not insist upon either; perhaps neither is true; and if this is the case, we should like to hold Miss Woolson's charming volumes responsible for both. One of her books groups under the title of *Castle Nowhere* nine stories of the great lake country, from the southern shores of Erie to the further coasts of Superior; the other, called *Rodman the Keeper*, is a series of studies and brief romances of the South, from Florida northward to the Carolina mountains. The collections are different and alike in their fidelity to the physical and social conditions of these diverse regions; these are sometimes involved in romantic mists, and sometimes they are unsparingly distinct, but the sensitive and sympathetic spirit of the author, her humanity, her passion for nature, her love of beauty, and her delight in color, characterize all. Several of the stories in time past have given us very great pleasure, especially the "Solomon" and the "Wilhelmina," which we have mentioned, and which are pictures of life in the community of the Separatists at Zoar, in Ohio,[1] and "The Lady of Little Fishing," a romance placed beyond the reach of the gazetteer on an island of Lake Superior; and we have been reading them over again with a satisfaction not diminished by the greater intelligence which the ten or fifteen years passed since their first publication may be supposed to have brought even to a critic. In fact, their assemblage under one cover somehow throws a new light on all the stories, and one sees, or seems to see—it is best not to be positive—that their final value, or the merit that they have in supreme degree, is to have caught and recorded in very clear and impressive terms the finest poetry which stirs in the heart of wild, new countries. This poetry is a religious aspiration or possession, often grotesque and delusive, but always touched with sublimity and sanctified by impulses of unselfish sincerity. The reader will feel it most in the study of "St. Clair Flats" and in the pathetic romance of "The Lady of Little Fishing"; but a sense of it imbues and qualifies nearly the whole book, which assumes a historical importance from it, as "Rodman the Keeper" and the companion pieces achieve vastly more than their aesthetic interest by eternizing that moment of heart-break and irreconciliation in the South when its women began to realize all their woe and loss through the defeat of their section in the war. Something

1 A communal, agrarian society in east-central Ohio founded in 1817 by German religious dissenters and called the Society of Separatists of Zoar.

more and something better than the literary instinct helped our author to the perception of things which give both of these books their uncommon claim to remembrance; she has made them necessary to any one who would understand the whole meaning of Americanism, or would know some of its most recondite phases by virtue of qualities which are felt in all her work, and at which we have hinted. These qualities, which are above artistry, to our thinking, need not make one indifferent to that; one would lose a great deal that is beautiful and valuable if they did. Miss Woolson deals with nature and with human nature in a fresh way, or at least a way of her own, which is at once simple in its kindliness and conscious of the limitations of all human judgment, where it ceases to be a question of suffering, sin, love, and hate, and becomes a question of sufferer, sinner, lover, and hater, with their relation to the frame of things, and to that material aspect of the universe, which now seems so deaf and blind to humanity, and now so full of poignant sympathy. The landscape is apt to grow sentient under her touch, which in the portrayal of that beautiful and deadly Florida swamp in "The South Devil" is really life-giving: the wicked, brilliant thing becomes animate. In this a writer who has since evolved for herself one of the most interesting phases of realism is romantic, but her epoch is distinctly marked by her forbearance in another respect: she does not extort an allegory from the malign morass, as Hawthorne must have done in obedience to the expectation of his time, nor suggest a psychical significance in it, as the romance of a little later period would have done. It is a merely animal life which "The South Devil" lives.

II.

Another group of short stories, called *Poverty Grass*, by Mrs. Lillie Chace Wyman,[1] a writer not otherwise known, but destined to be less and less unknown if she keeps on writing, seems in its absolute and unswerving realism like the effect of a vow not to take from the truth one jot or tittle,[2] or add to it any shadow of fancy in character or condition. The "Child of the State," though not the first in order in the book, is first in importance for its revelation of the author's power to deal faithfully yet not repulsively, pathetically yet not sentimentally, with one of the most awful problems of civilization. No one who read it, when first published in *Atlantic Monthly* some years ago, can have

1 Writer and social activist Lillie Chace Wyman's (1847-1929) *Poverty Grass* (1886), is a collection of stories treating the harsh conditions of mill workers and the spiritual fortitude that sustains them.

2 Matthew 5:18: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

forgotten it: the thing has a kind of monumental strength and quiet, and stands arraigning creed and law for their helplessness or hurtfulness with unsparing insistence. The other stories in the volume are mostly like it: simple, grim, true to misery, toil, pain, vulgarity, savagery, and the tenderness and beauty coexisting with these in the barest, bleakest, commonest lives. It is surely not a book for those who would like fiction to make out that life is a pretty play or an amusing game and would have all sorrows end well, that their sensibilities may be tickled and pampered. But men and women who wish to meet other men and women in literature, and to hear them speak out the heart of human passion in the language of life, need not be afraid of these powerful sketches. They cannot help being better men and women for reading them, if only in awakened pity and good-will.

A gentler pathos, a pensiveness lit with the humor which is absent from Mrs. Wyman's work, breathes from Miss Jewett's latest book. *A White Heron and Other Stories*, is not the volume which we would praise as showing the author at her best, and yet some of the pieces could hardly be better. One may say that certain of them are slight and tame to the point of fragility and the temper of the cosset,[1] but others are exquisitely good. "The Dulham Ladies," whose final and most thrilling adventure is buying two frizzes[2] of a deceiving French hairdresser; "Martha and Mary," to whom the god appears in a reconciled cousin with the gift of a sewing machine, are masterpieces of a kind that one would simply like to go on reading forever in that quiet, restful, humorously appreciative style of Miss Jewett. They are as satisfying at once and as appetizing as "March Rosemary," where the material of a much longer tale is wildly flung away in the story of the poor old maid who marries the worthless youth sailor, and who makes a long journey to expose him to the second wife after he abandons her, and then seeing their happy home through the window, with its promise of usefulness for the man, returns to her desolation without taking her revenge.

III.

It is this occasional lavishness in the writers of short stories which gives one question whether a branch of the art of fiction tempting to such profusion ought to be encouraged. The motives which are both great and simple are not so many that the profusion can afford to waste them in the narrow limits of a tale or sketch, and we conjure the writer of short stories to make sure that he has not one of these in

1 "To temper the cosset" means to have the delicate constitution of a pet lamb.

2 A frizz is a wig of crisp curls.

hand before he casts his plot irrevocably in that miniature mould. We think a little question will usually enable him to decide whether he has hold of a short-story motive or a long-story motive. We believe the two are readily distinguishable, though not so easily definable. The short story should perhaps involve merely an episode, a phase; what is more, and especially what contains the germ of much conditioning or characterization, belongs to the novel.

Commonly, however, the matter will decide itself through the age of the writer. The novelette, like the poem or the romance, may come from youth and the first acquaintance with life, but the novel is of years and experience. There are, of course, exceptions, in which what is or seems a novel is the work of a youthful hand; and if any one were to think that women, by reason of their more restricted lives and necessarily narrower outlook into the world were more successful with the novelette than the novel, he had better not say it, because it might displease a whole sex, and it might not be true. Better reserve such a thought, we should say, for further meditation in secret. What is certain is that almost all novelists who begin early begin by writing short stories or novelettes, and that some of the most brilliant achievements in that sort have been the work of women. The sort seems immemorial, but not to go further back than Boccaccio[1] and the other Italian novelists, we find it the form which prose fiction took. These novelists, and their imitators in France and Spain, gave prose an ease and grace and naturalness which it did not show till very much later in English, when the essayists of the *Spectator*[2] began to tell their little stories with a finer characterization of the personages than had yet been employed; for the Latin novelists, with all their delightful literary skill, dealt mainly with types well known and generally accepted. It became and remained in most countries the receptacle of the marvellous and the typical, though

1 Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-75) is the Italian author of *The Decameron* (1350-53), a frame tale narrative in which seven young women and three men who flee from Florence to the countryside to escape the plague tell tales, one hundred in all, to pass the time.

2 *The Spectator* was a daily magazine published in 1711-12 by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. It featured a fictional narrator, "Mr. Spectator," who moved throughout social circles in London, commenting on the habits and foibles of the people he observed. The second number of *The Spectator* introduced Mr. Spectator's friends as members of the "Spectator Club." Drawn from different classes and stations of life, these club members provided a broader range of stories about contemporary British life and social conduct.

Zschokke[1] in Germany deepened the lines of the short story, and found more room in it for character than had perhaps found place there before him. The Germans of the romantic school infused in it a mysticism which still often qualifies the English and American short story.

The great English novelists of the period just before ours served their apprenticeship in the short story, but the work of Dickens and Thackeray[2] in that way is apprentice-work, and does not bear the relation to their novels which the stories of George Eliot[3] bear to hers. The first of these masters continually recurred to the minor form with varying success; but Thackeray did not go back to it from the room and greater freedom of the novel. Mr. Black,[4] we believe, does not write short stories at all; Mr. Hardy[5] writes them, and always charmingly; Mr. Anstie[6] writes them, and always amusingly. In

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1 Johann Heinrich Daniel Zschokke (1771-1848) was a German author and Protestant theologian who became a Swiss citizen in 1796. The best known of his tales are "*Die Walpurgisnacht*" ("The Walpurgisnacht," 1812), "*Hans Dampf in allen Gassen*" ("Jack-of-all-trades," 1814), "*Das Abenteuer in der Neujahrsnacht*" ("The Adventure in the New Year's Night," 1818), and "*Ein Narr des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*" ("A Fool of the Nineteenth Century," 1822).

2 British novelist Charles Dickens (1812-70) began his illustrious career as a poltical journalist; his sketches drawn from journalism were published in 1836 as *Sketches By Boz*, and resulted in the serialization of his first novel that same year, *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickens's other short story collections include *Boots at the Holly-tree Inn* (1858), *The Mudfrog Papers* (1880), and *To Be Read at Dusk* (1898). William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63), the author of *Vanity Fair* (1848), began his career writing under the pseudonyms Charles James Yellowplush, Michael Angelo Titmarsh, and George Savage Fitz-Boodle; in 1837 he published a series of satirical sketches known as *The Yellowplush Papers* in *Fraser's Magazine*.

3 George Eliot (1819-80), the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, began her career with the short story collection, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858). She followed this one year later with the publication of her first novel, *Adam Bede*.

4 William Black (1841-98) was a Scottish novelist and member of the "Kailyard (cabbage patch) school," a group of Scottish writers who used the vernacular to depict small-town life in Scotland from approximately 1888 to 1896. Black wrote the novels *A Daughter of Heth* (1871), *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton* (1872), *A Princess of Thule* (1873), *Madcap Violet* (1876), and *Macleod of Dare* (1879).

5 Though primarily known as a novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) published over forty short stories, most of which were collected in *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), and *A Changed Man* (1913).

6 A misspelled reference to Thomas Anstey Guthrie (1856-1934), who pub-

France, Zola[1] has not reverted even to the comparatively long short stories of his first period; Daudet[2] almost as rarely does them; and in Italy, Verga,[3] in some respects a greater master than either, has made powerful studies and sketches, rather than told tales, in his short stories. Tourguénieff's[4] are studies and sketches too, rather than tales, and striking as they are, they are distinctly inferior to his novels. In Auerbach's village tales[5] one has the sense of being among pigmy folk; the traits and conditions are all well ascertained, but the scale is small, and the persons seem not related to human nature at large. That colossus of the north, Björnstjerne Björnson,[6] knows in supreme degree how to till the little limits of the short story with powerful figures and the great motives of universal experience; some of his briefest tales, three or four pages long, have an immeasurable depth and distance in them.

IV.

But we are not sure, after all, as we hinted in the beginning, that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense than almost any other people, and for reasons very simple and near at hand. It might be argued from the national hurry

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lished popular sketches and stories in *Punch* beginning in 1886 under the pseudonym of F. Anstey.

1 French writer Emile Zola (1840-1902), whose novels highlight the environmental origins of social ills such as violence, alcoholism, and prostitution, began his literary career in 1864 with the publication of a story collection, *Contes à Ninon*.

2 Alphonse Daudet's (1840-97) earliest work was *Lettres de mon Moulin* (*Letters From my Windmill*, 1869), a collection of light-hearted tales that discuss life in the Provence region of southern France. His other short story collection is *Contes du Lundi* (*Monday Tales*, 1873).

3 The Italian writer Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) published his story collection about life in rural Sicily, *Vita dei campi* (*Life in the Fields*), in 1880.

4 The Russian writer Ivan Turgenev (1818-83), whose most famous work is the novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862), wrote several sketch and story collections, including *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), *Asya* (1858), *First Love* (1860), *King Lear of the Steppes* (1870), *Torrents of Spring* (1872), and *The Mysterious Tales* (1883).

5 Bertold Auerbach (1812-82) is credited with creating the peasant-story genre in German literature with his stylized representations of peasant life in *Village Tales From the Black Forest* (1846-47).

6 Norweigan writer Björnstjerne Björnson (1832-1910), awarded the 1903 Nobel Prize in Literature, published three important collections of *bonde-fortellinger* or peasant tales: *Arne* (1858), *En glad Gut* (*A Happy Boy*) in 1860, and *Fiskerjenten* (*The Fisher Maiden*) in 1868.

and impatience that it was a literary form peculiarly adapted to the American temperament, but we suspect that its extraordinary development among us is owing much more to more tangible facts. The success of American magazines, which is nothing less than prodigious, is only commensurate with their excellence. There can be no question that it is one effect of the highest editorial skill, when each of the two great illustrated American periodicals attains a currency as large as that of the *Family Herald*[1] in England, or the *Petit Journal*[2] in France. This sort of success is not only from the courage to decide what ought to please, but from the knowledge of what does please; and it is probable that, aside from the pictures, it is the short stories which please the readers of our best magazines. The serial novels they must have, of course; but rather more of course they must have short stories, and by operation of the law of supply and demand, the short stories, abundant in quantity and excellent in quality, are forth-coming because they are wanted. By another operation of the same law, which political economists have more recently taken account of, the demand follows the supply, and short stories are sought for because there is a proven ability to furnish them, and people read them willingly because they are usually very good. The art of writing them is now so disciplined and diffused with us that there is no lack either for the magazines or for the newspaper "syndicates" which deal in them almost to the exclusion of the serials. In other countries the *feuilleton* of the journals[3] is a novel continued from day to day, but with us the papers, whether daily or weekly, now more rarely print novels, whether they get them at first hand from the writers, as a great many do, or through the syndicates, which purvey a vast variety of literary wares, chiefly for the Sunday editions of the city journals. In the country papers the short story takes the place of the chapters of a serial which used to be given.

This demand, so great that it is not easily calculable, accounts for the quantity of our short stories, but it is to the taste with which our

1 *The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information & Amusement* (1844-1940) was the first English story paper. A weekly, it featured serialized novels, short stories, poetry, and columns on science, statistics, domestic issues and recipes, as well as anecdotes, odd facts, and jokes. By 1855, its circulation was 240,000 a week.

2 *Le Petit Journal* (1863-1944) was a daily Parisian newspaper that published serialized novels. In the 1890s, at the peak of its popularity, it had a circulation of one million copies.

3 Translated from the French, *feuilleton* literally means "serial." Howells uses it here to describe that portion of European newspapers or magazines that contained material designed to entertain the general reader, often consisting of serialized novels.

magazines are made that we mainly owe their quality; and in establishing and elevating this taste we must recognize as very eminent the influence, now as always sane and good, of the *Atlantic Monthly*.[1] The *Galaxy*[2] did much to the same end in its time; *Lippincott's Magazine*[3] much also; and we expect nothing but good in this way from our neighbor, the new *Scribner's*.[4]

It would not be easy to name all the novelists among us who have first made themselves known in this sort, and the enterprise would not be altogether safe, for we should be sure to forget some of them. It is not easy, either, to think of their admirable performance and not wish to recognize it. In some cases they have surpassed it in their novels; in others their short stories remain their best work. To take them alphabetically, in the right democratic fashion, we suppose it must be an open question whether Mr. Aldrich[5] has "broken his record" in any of the novels he has written since *Marjorie Daw*,[6] and the other short stories only less admirable than that because in its way that is unique. Another novelist of what may be called the *Atlantic* school, Mr. W.H.

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1 *Atlantic Monthly* (currently published as *The Atlantic*) was originally founded in 1857 in Boston by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and James Russell Lowell (who became its first editor). Howells served as editor from 1871 to 1881.

2 *The Galaxy* was a monthly magazine of "entertaining reading" first published in 1867. In 1878 it was absorbed into *Atlantic Monthly*.

3 *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* was published in Philadelphia from 1868 to 1915. Specializing in literature, it featured such well-known writers as Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and Oscar Wilde. It merged with *Scribner's Magazine* in 1916.

4 *Scribner's Magazine* (1887-1939) was primarily a literary journal, though it also published political writing such as Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1889). Its chief innovation was the use of full-color illustrations beginning in 1900.

5 Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907), a poet, editor, and novelist, created a sensation with his best-selling, semi-autobiographical novel, *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870), which Mark Twain claimed inspired his creation of Tom Sawyer and which Howells hailed as the first truly American novel. His later novels include *Prudence Palfrey* (1874), *The Queen of Sheba* (1877), and *The Stillwater Tragedy* (1880). Aldrich succeeded Howells as editor of *Atlantic Monthly* from 1881 to 1890.

6 *Marjorie Daw and Other People* (1873) is a collection of stories by Aldrich that Howells praised in *Atlantic Monthly* ("Recent Literature," volume 32, November 1873) as fiction "in which character and incident constantly verge with us towards the brink of a quite precipitous surprise ending without being for a moment less delightful as character and incident, and without being less so even when we look up from the gulf into which they have plunged us."

Bishop,[1] has proved himself of the longer breath requisite for the novel, but his *Detmold*, his *House of a Merchant Prince*, and his *Golden Justice* can not make us forget how good *One of the Twenty Pieces* was, how delicious *The Battle of Bunkerloo*. Mrs. Rose Terry Cooke's[2] stories have, we believe, the competition of no novel from her hand; *Freedom Wheeler's Controversy with Providence* is a masterpiece, and we think that the best of her stories are destined to a recognition which will not finally be affected by the inequality of her work. The novels of Charles Egbert Craddock[3] (if we are to spell Miss Murfree's name with a C, as she prefers) have not yet outrivalled her first short stories in boldness and strength of outline, nor in value of detail uncheapened by its excess. Caroline Chesebro'[4] was the author of short stories of

1 William Henry Bishop was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1847, and graduated from Yale University in 1867. His romance, *Detmold*, was published in 1879, followed by *The House of a Merchant Prince: A Novel of New York Life* in 1882. His novel *The Golden Justice* was serialized in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1886. Howells compares these novels less favorably to Bishop's stories, "One of the Thirty Pieces" (published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1876) and "The Battle of Bunkerloo," published in the collection *Choy Susan and Other Stories* (1884).

2 New England writer Rose Terry Cooke (1827-92) contributed seven short stories to the first eight numbers of *Atlantic Monthly*. Her story "Freedom Wheeler's Controversy With Providence" was published in *Atlantic Monthly*, volume 40, issue 237, 1877. Many of her stories were republished in *Somebody's Neighbors* (1881), *Root-Bound and Other Sketches* (1885), *The Sphinx's Children and Other People's* (1886), and *Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills* (1891). Cooke's one attempt at a novel, *Steadfast, the Story of a Saint and a Sinner* (1889), was significantly less successful.

3 The pseudonym of Tennessee writer Mary Noailles Murfree (1850-1922), whose first volume of stories, *In the Tennessee Mountains* (1884), was an immediate critical and popular success. Her novels include *Down the Ravine* (1885), *The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains* (1885), *In the Clouds* (1886), *The Story of Keedon Bluffs* (1888), *The Despot of Broomsedge Cove* (1889), *In the "Stranger Peoples'" Country* (1891), *His Vanished Star* (1894), *The Phantoms of the Footbridge and Other Stories* (1895), *The Mystery of Witch-Face Mountain and Other Stories* (1895), *The Juggler* (1897), and *The Young Mountaineers* (1897).

4 The pseudonym of New York writer Caroline Cheseborough (1825-73), whose first book was *Dream-land by Daylight* (1851), a collection of sketches and tales. Her subsequent fictions include the novel *Isa, a Pilgrimage* (1852), followed by *The Children of Light* (1853), *The Little Cross-Bearers* (1854), *Susan, the Fisherman's Daughter; or, Getting Along* (1855), *The Beautiful Gate, and Other Stories* (1855), *Victoria* (1856), *Philly and Kit* (1856), *Peter Carradine; or, The Martindale Pastoral* (1863), *The Sparrow's Fall* (1863), *Amy Carr* (1864), *The Fisherman of Gamp's Island* (1865), *The Glen Cabin* (1865), and *The Foe in the Household* (1871).

original quality and most honest workmanship. *The Great Doctor*, by Alice Cary,[1] is one of the best stories of life in the middle West ever written. Mrs. Rebecca Harding Davis[2] has written stories which, if of an effect too nearly immediate, are very intense. J.W. DeForest,[3] a novelist whose work has in some respects not only not been surpassed, but not approached, among us—a realist before realism was named, and an admirably equipped artist—is the author of a score or so of short stories, among which the veteran magazine reader will recall *My Neighbor the Prophet*, *The Taillefer Bell Ringers*, *The Drummer Ghost*, *The Lauson Tragedy*, and others of a force now mystical and now grimly satirical, but always true to human nature. Mr. P. Deming[4] in his Adirondack studies and stories impresses, again, with his absolute faithfulness, with a most conscientious simplicity, and touching tenderness; he unites to much of Auerbach's charm and minor truth much of the virtue of Björnson's universality. He is not known at all as a novelist; but in a literature less rich in short stories than ours he would have achieved a repute indefinitely greater than the modest recognition which he now enjoys. Mr. Bret Harte's[5] novels are of

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1 Though Ohio writer Alice Cary (1820-71) considered herself first and foremost a poet, she is best remembered for her regional sketches, published in two volumes, entitled *Clovernook Papers* (1852, 1853).

2 Rebecca Harding Davis (1831-1910) achieved early fame with "Life in the Iron Mills" in the April 1861 edition of *Atlantic Monthly*. Her short fiction, published in periodicals such as *Scribner's*, *Lippincott's*, *Harper's Monthly,* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, includes the stories "David Gaunt" (1862), "John Lamar" (1862), "Paul Blecker" (1863), "Ellen" (1865), "The Harmonists" (1866), "In the Market" (1868), "A Pearl of Great Price" (1868), "Put Out of the Way" (1870), "General William Wirt Colby" (1873), "Earthern Pitchers" (1873-74), "Marcia" (1876), and "A Day With Doctor Sarah" (1878).

3 A Civil War veteran and writer, John William De Forest (1826-1906) is best known for his novel, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867). He is also credited with being the first writer to use the term "realism" in his essay, "The Great American Novel," published in *The Nation* on 9 January 1868.

4 Philander Deming (1829-1915) published his first short story, "Lost" (1873), in *Atlantic Monthly*. Howells continued to publish his local color fiction, which was later collected in *Adirondack Stories* (1880) and *Tompkins and Other Folks* (1885).

5 Bret Harte's (1836-1902) best known short stories, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (1868) and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" (1869), were introduced during his tenure as the editor of *Overland Monthly*, California's first literary magazine. He published his first collection of stories, *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Stories*, in 1870. The following year he was paid $10,000 by the *Atlantic Monthly* to produce twelve stories a year for the journal. Harte's other story collections include *Mrs Skaggs's Husbands* (1873), *Tales of the Argonauts* (1875), and *An Heiress of Red Dog and Other Sketches* (1878).

course inferior to his short stories, written in the spirit of expiring romance, and profoundly moving the reader with the types of that school transplanted into novel circumstance and seen through a new atmosphere. Mr. E.E. Hale's[1] short stories, again, are better than his larger work, and have a charm which is altogether their own, and a singular vitality; their power of establishing in the reader's consciousness any given impossibility as a fact is an extraordinary triumph of the delightful fancy with which they are written. Mr. Edward H. House[2] has written stories of Japanese life full of novelty and humorous sympathy. Mr. James's[3] short stories, especially *A Passionate Pilgrim* and *The Romance of Certain Old Clothes*, are of the highest quality in the highest sort; we should hardly know how to match them for effects at once imaginative and realistic, and for a sympathy all the deeper for the self-control in which they are written; one also feels in them the unjaded youthful joy of doing a new kind of thing vigorously. Of Miss Jewett's exquisite sketches we need hardly speak; they are as clearly a find as anything else in our literature, and entirely her own. Ralph Keeler's[4] *Confessions of a Patent Medicine Man* was of a sort which, if he had lived, he might have won lasting repute from. Mr. Lathrop,[5] who has done so much so respectably in so many ways, is at his best, we think, in a short story of his called *Left Out*—the simple study of a man whom the whole world has passed by; and his apparently slight sketch *In a Market Wagon* has a tenderness and delicate naturalness which leave the impression of far more spacious work. *The Case of John Dedlock* and *The Autobiography of a Quack*, among the short stories of

1 Massachusetts author and Unitarian minister, Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909), came to prominence in 1859 when he published the story, "My Double and How He Undid Me" in *Atlantic Monthly*. His best known story, "The Man Without A Country" also appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863. He published the collection *His Level Best, and Other Stories* in 1872.

2 Boston journalist Edward H. House (1836-1901) published *Japanese Episodes* in 1881.

3 Henry James (1843-1916), one of America's greatest novelists, published "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" and "A Passionate Pilgrim" in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1868 and 1871, respectively.

4 Ralph Olmstead Keeler (1840-73), an Ohio-born journalist, is the author of the novel, *Gloverson and His Silent Partners* (1869), and of autobiographical sketches in *Vagabond Adventures* (1870). His "Confessions of a Patent-Medicine Man" was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1870.

5 Hawaiian-born author and husband of Rose Hawthorne (Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter), George Parsons Lathrop (1851-98) became the associate editor of *Atlantic Monthly* under William Dean Howells in 1875. "Left Out" (1877) and "In A Market Wagon" (1874) were both published in *Atlantic Monthly*.

Dr. Weir Mitchell,[1] are of equal masterliness in their several ways. Mrs. Prescott Spofford,[2] in the earlier and perhaps easier days, made a national reputation with her *In a Cellar* and *The Amber Gods*, and yet we are not sure that the achievement was less difficult than it would be now, when we recollect that Fitz-James O'Brien[3] wrote *The Diamond Lens* at the same period. This was a sort of last refinement upon the manner and material of Poe, whose stories evolved a fantastic effect from a highly elaborated mechanism, still more subtly contrived and adjusted by the later artist. Another famous story of O'Brien's was that of the grewsome goblin which could be felt but not seen; and in proper scientific evolution from this appeared, not many years ago, one of the most striking achievements of fantasy which we can recall, namely, Mr. C. DeKay's *Manmatha*,[4] a study of the survival of the most transparent. We mention him here out of his order in the almanac and the alphabet lest we might otherwise fail to pay a just tribute to his ingenious work. Of Miss E.S. Phelps's[5] short stories we

1 American physician and writer, Silas Weir Mitchell (1829-1914), was famous for introducing the "rest cure" as an antidote for female hysteria; feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) was his patient and described the disastrous effects of this treatment in her story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). Howells mistitles Mitchell's story about a young soldier's first experience of battle, "The Case of George Dedlow," published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1866, as "The Case of John Dedlock"; Howells here may be remembering a character in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* named Sir Leicester Dedlock. Mitchell's *The Autobiography of a Quack* was published in 1890.

2 Novelist and poet, Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), published her first story, "In a Cellar," in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1859. Her collection, *The Amber Gods, and Other Stories*, appeared in 1863.

3 Irish writer and US immigrant, Fitz-James O'Brien (1828-62), is a nineteenth-century forerunner of science fiction. His most famous story, "The Diamond Lens," was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1858; the other "famous" O'Brien story to which Howells alludes is "What Was It? A Mystery," published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1859.

4 Charles De Kay (1848-1935) was a *New York Times* art critic and founder of The National Arts Club in 1898, who also published a series of stories including "The Bohemian" (1878), "Hesperus" (1880), "Vision of Nimrod" (1881), "Vision of Esther" (1882), and "Love Poems of Louis Barnaval" (1883). "Manmatha" was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1876.

5 New England writer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1911) authored fifty-seven books, hundreds of short stories, magazine articles, and poems. Many of her novels address social problems specific to women, including *Hedged In* (1879), *The Silent Partner* (1871), and *Doctor Zay* (1882), while her most complex novel, *The Story of Avis* (1877), is the first American novel to represent a failed marriage as its subject. Her story "In the Gray Goth" was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1867.

like most *In the Gray Goth*, an incident of life among the lumbermen of the Maine woods, very simple, powerful, and affecting, and of an unrestrained human quality which the gifted author too seldom consents to give us. Of Mr. F.R. Stockton's[1] stories what is there to say but that they are an unmixed blessing and delight? He is surely one of the most inventive of talents, discovering not only a new kind in humor and fancy, but accumulating an inexhaustible wealth of details in each fresh achievement, the least of which would be riches from another hand. *The Man who Stole the Meeting-House* is the best of all of Mr. J.T. Trowbridge's[2] short stories, among which we remember few poor ones. Both of these charming writers seem at their most charming in their stories, and less successful in their novels, as was also the case with Bayard Taylor.[3] It is not a question with regard to Uncle Remus, for Mr. Harris[4] writes no novels, and as yet Mr. Thomas N. Page,[5] who is one of the writers advancing the name of the new South

1 Frank Richard Stockton (1834-1902) was one of the most popular writers in late nineteenth-century America. He wrote across genres, including realism and fantasy, science fiction and detective stories, children's literature, and adult romances. His most well-known story is "The Lady, or the Tiger?" (1882). Nineteenth-century readers favored his novels: *The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine* (1886), *The Adventures of Captain Horn* (1895), *What Might Have Been Expected* (1874), *The Great War Syndicate* (1889), and *The Great Stone of Sardis* (1898).

2 Writer and editor, John Townsend Trowbridge (1827-1916)—who also wrote under the pen name of Paul Creyton—was the youngest contributor to the first edition of *Atlantic Monthly*, which featured such established writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. He was also a well-known friend of Walt Whitman. His story "The Man Who Stole A Meeting House" was first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1867.

3 Bayard Taylor (1825-78) was a poet and travel writer who also published fiction, including the novels *Hannah Thurston* (1863) and *Joseph and His Friend: A Story of Pennsylvania* (1870). The latter is the story of an intimate friendship between two men and is thought by some critics to be the first novel in American literature to treat queer themes. One of Taylor's stories that Howells prefers over the novels, "Who Was She?," was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1874.

4 Georgia-born author Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) began publishing the "Uncle Remus" stories, drawn from the African-American oral tradition, in the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1879. Popular in depicting idealized race relations after the Civil War, the stories were collected into the volumes *Uncle Remus; His Songs and His Sayings. The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation* (1880), *Nights with Uncle Remus* (1881 and 1882), *Uncle Remus and His Friends* (1892), and *Uncle Remus and the Little Boy* (1905).

5 Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) was a Virginia writer noted for producing stories and, later, novels, that idealized the pre-Civil War South. His first

in literature, has not attempted anything but short stories. *Our Phil* and *Marty's Various Mercies*, by Mrs. Olive A. Wadsworth,[1] are delicious pieces of colored character; and Mrs. S.B. Wister's[2] *Carnival of Rome* and *Carnival of Venice* are uncommon realizations of uncommon people: the apparently insipid, passionately romantic English woman who chiefly figures in the latter is a personage whom one remembers like few heroines of novels.

V.

No doubt we have failed to mention writers whose names will occur to the reader, but we have mentioned enough to show that our claim for American excellence in short stories is not founded solely in our patriotism. An interesting fact in regard to the different varieties of the short story among us is that the sketches and studies by the women seem faithfuler and more realistic than those of the men, in proportion to their number. Their tendency is more distinctly in that direction, and there is a solidity, an honest report of observation, in the work of such women as Mrs. Cooke, Miss Murfree, Miss Jewett, and Miss Woolson which often leaves little to be desired. We should, upon the whole, be disposed to rank American short stories only below those of such Russian writers as we have read. These perhaps seem fresher because they are stranger, but we think that Tolstoy[3] has deepened and widened the possibilities of achievement within narrow limits beyond any other writer. We have heretofore spoken of his *Scenes of the Siege of Sebastopol*, of their powerful characterization and their absolute verity.

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dialect story of old Virginia, "Marse Chan," appeared in *Century Magazine* in 1884. Other stories written in African-American dialect appeared in 1867 in the collection *In Ole Virginia*.

1 Olive A. Wadsworth was the pen name of New York writer, Katherine Floyd Dana (1835-86), who published stories of plantation life in Maryland, such as "Our Phil" and "Martie's Various Mercies," in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1869 and 1874, respectively. A collection of these tales, *Our Phil and Other Stories*, was published under her own name in 1889.

2 Sarah Butler Wister (1835-1908) was the daughter of English-born, American actress Fanny Kemble and the mother of American novelist, Owen Wister (author of *The Virginian*, 1902). Howells accepted two of her stories for *Atlantic Monthly*: "A Carnival of Venice," published in 1875, and "A Carnival of Rome," in 1876.

3 Widely regarded as among the greatest of novelists, Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) is the author of two important realist masterpieces: *War and Peace* (1865-69) and *Anna Karenina* (1873-77). The *Sevastopol Sketches* were published in 1855-56, while the story "The Two Hussars" (translated into French as "*Deux Générations*") appeared in 1856. *The Death of Ivan Illitch* was published in 1886.

Lately the French have translated *Deux Générations*, the study of an abominable father, and a son differently abominable through the change from earlier to later customs and ideals; and *La Mort d'Ivan Illitch*, which cannot fail to leave the profoundest impression with every reader. This last is an account of the mortal sickness of Ivan Illitch, in which the man almost sensibly suffers and dies before you. Its unsparing force searches the heart, and humbles it with such a sense of mortality as rarely penetrates to it through the world and its manifold vanities and the habit of life. It is full of touches of the truest pathos, and the master and teacher who speaks to us in it shrinks from no fact of the situation that can verify it to the imagination and the conscience. You go down into the valley of the shadow with Ivan, and you know him, and all his household as if you had dwelt with then. We can hardly say how this intimacy is established; perhaps through the sincerity of the writer, who does not once strike an erring note, and who wastes no stroke in ornament or literary prettiness. The effects in this simple study are as deep and broad, as far-reaching, as in a tragedy of Shakespeare, which it about equals in length. It is a prodigious lesson in life and in letters, and the best of our short-story writers might conceive from it possibilities for his art undreamt of before.

2. Hamlin Garland, "Local Color in Art" (1894)

[Hamlin Garland (1860-1940) was a novelist, essayist, and literary critic whose own literary practice demonstrates the precepts of local color that he outlines in this essay. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Garland's first collection of stories was *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), which described the hard life of middle-border farmers. In addition to a lifelong focus on the economics of farming—exemplified in such novels as *Jason Edwards* (1892) and *The Spoils of Office* (1892)—Garland was also an advocate for women's and Native-American rights; this latter commitment can be seen in his 1902 novel, *The Captain of the Grey Horse Troop*, and in several short stories published in *The Book of the American Indian* (1923). Garland also published several autobiographical memoirs of his boyhood in Wisconsin, such as *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917) and *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1922. His only collection of literary theory, *Crumbling Idols* (1894), argues that the established traditions of art and literature are now crumbling into dust with the advent of contemporary regional art, local color, and "veritism," a term he coined to describe a mode of realism that combined a realist's attention to lifelike detail with an impressionist's

propensity to paint objects as they appear in his or her subjective vision. The text of this selection is drawn from *Crumbling Idols* (Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1984), 49-55.]

V. Local Color in Art

Local color in fiction is demonstrably the life of fiction. It is the native element, the differentiating element. It corresponds to the endless and vital charm of individual peculiarity. It is the differences which interest us; the similarities do not please, do not forever stimulate and feed as do the differences. Literature would die of dry rot if it chronicled the similarities only, or even largely.

Historically, the local color of a poet or dramatist is of the greatest value. The charm of Horace[1] is the side light he throws on the manners and customs of his time. The vital in Homer[2] lies, after all, in his local color, not in his abstractions. Because the sagas of the North[3] delineate more exactly how men and women lived and wrought in those days, therefore they have always appealed to me with infinitely greater power than Homer.

Similarly, it is the local color of Chaucer[4] that interests us to-day. We yawn over his tales of chivalry which were in the manner of his contemporaries, but the Miller and the Priest interest us. Wherever the man of the past in literature showed us what he really lived and loved, he moves us. We understand him, and we really feel an interest in him.

Historically, local color has gained in beauty and suggestiveness and humanity from Chaucer down to the present day. Each age has embodied more and more of its actual life and social conformation until the differentiating qualities of modern art make the best paint-

1 Horace (65-8 BCE) was the leading Roman poet during the reign of Augustus. A friend of Virgil, Horace wrote odes, epodes, satires, and epistles, the best known of which is the *Ars Poetica*, which outlines his theory of poetry.

2 Homer is the legendary ancient Greek epic poet whose name is recorded as the "author" of both the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*, though both are now considered to be the result of a tradition of oral poetry composed over centuries.

3 Garland may be referring to the Icelandic sagas, a medieval collection of narratives that describe Viking voyages and detail daily political and agrarian life.

4 Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) is the author of the frame-tale narrative, *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-94), which demonstrated the artistry of the English vernacular.

ings of Norway as distinct in local color as its fiction is vital and indigenous.[1]

Every great moving literature today is full of local color. It is this element which puts the Norwegian and Russian almost at the very summit of modern novel writing, and it is the comparative lack of this distinctive flavor which makes the English and French take a lower place in truth and sincerity.

Everywhere all over the modern European world, men are writing novels and dramas as naturally as the grass or corn or flax grows. The Provençal, the Hun, the Catalonian, the Norwegian, is getting a hearing. This literature is not the literature of scholars; it is the literature of lovers and doers; of men who love the modern and who have not been educated to despise common things.

These men are speaking a new word. They are not hunting themes, they are struggling to express.

Conventional criticism does not hamper or confine them. They are rooted in the soil. They stand among the cornfields and they dig in the peat-bogs. They concern themselves with modern and very present words and themes, and they have brought a new word which is to divide in half the domain of beauty.

They have made art the re-creation of the beautiful *and the significant*. Mere beauty no longer suffices. Beauty is the world-old aristocrat who has taken for mate this mighty young plebeian Significance. Their child is to be the most human and humane literature ever seen.

It has taken the United States longer to achieve independence of English critics than it took to free itself from old-world political and economic rule. Its political freedom was won, not by its gentlemen and scholars, but by its yeomanry; and in the same way our national literature will come in its fullness when the common American rises spontaneously to the expression of his concept of life.

The fatal blight upon most American art has been, and is to-day, its imitative quality, which has kept it characterless and factitious, —a forced rose-culture rather than the free flowering of native plants.

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1 Garland seems to be referring to such Norwegian painters as Niels Gustav (1859-1927), Sven Jórgensen (1861-1940), Fredrik Kolsto (1860-1945), and Christian Krohg (1852-1925), who, in the 1880s, practiced a naturalism that foregrounded social conditions, common subjects, and regional landscapes. The major Norwegian novelists from this period include Jonas Lie (1833-1908), author of *Gaa paa!* (*Go Ahead*, 1882), *Livsslaven* (*One of Life's Slaves*, 1883), *Familjen paa Gilje* (*The Family at Gilje*, 1883), and Alexander Kielland (1849-1906), whose novels include *Skipper Worse* (1882), *Gift* (1883), and *Fortuna* (1884).

Our writers despised or feared the home market. They rested their immortality upon the "universal theme," which was a theme of no interest to the public and of small interest to themselves.

During the first century and a half, our literature had very little national color. It was quite like the utterance of corresponding classes in England. But at length Bryant and Cooper[1] felt the influence of our mighty forests and prairies. Whittier[2] uttered something of New England boy-life, and Thoreau[3] prodded about among newly discovered wonders, and the American literature got its first start.

Under the influence of Cooper came the stories of wild life from Texas, from Ohio, and from Illinois. The wild, rough settlements could not produce smooth and cultured poems or stories; they only furnished forth rough-and-ready anecdotes, but in these stories there were hints of something fine and strong and native.

As the settlements increased in size, as the pressure of the forest and the wild beast grew less, expression rose to a higher plane; men softened in speech and manner. All preparations were being made for a local literature raised to the level of art.

The Pacific slope was first in the line. By the exceptional interest which the world took in the life of the gold fields, and by the forward urge which seems always to surprise the pessimist and the scholiast, two young men[4] were plunged into that wild life, led across the plains set in the shadow of Mount Shasta, and local literature received its first great marked, decided impetus.

To-day we have in America, at last, a group of writers who have no suspicion of imitation laid upon them. Whatever faults they may be supposed to have, they are at any rate, themselves. American critics

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1 Massachusetts poet William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) was an advocate of American literary nationalism whose poetry depicted nature as a revelation of truth. Prolific New York novelist, James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) is best known for his "Leatherstocking" novels (*The Pioneers*, 1823; *Last of the Mohicans*, 1826; *The Prairie*, 1826; *The Pathfinder*, 1840, and *The Deerslayer,* 1841) featuring the frontiersman Natty Bumppo and his Mohican companion, Chingachgook.

2 John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92), Quaker, poet, and ardent abolitionist, whose most successful work was *Snow-Bound* (1866), a depiction of nineteenth-century New England domestic life.

3 Author and naturalist Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), whose *Walden, or A Life in the Woods* (1854) argues that the natural world serves as a model for human cultures and societies.

4 Most likely an allusion to Bret Harte (1836-1902) and Mark Twain (1835-1910), both of whom contributed local color sketches and stories to *The Californian*, a literary newspaper published during the mid-1860s.

can depend upon a characteristic American literature of fiction and the drama from these people.

The corn has flowered, and the cotton-boll has broken into speech.

Local color—what is it? It means that the writer spontaneously reflects the life which goes on around him. It is natural and unstrained art.

It is, in a sense, unnatural and artificial to find an American writing novels of Russia or Spain or the Holy Land. He cannot hope to do it so well as the native. The best he can look for is that poor word of praise, "He does it very well, considering he is an alien."

If a young writer complain that there are no themes at home, that he is forced to go abroad for prospective and romance, I answer there is something wrong in his education or his perceptive faculty. Often he is more anxious to win a money success than to be patiently one of art's unhurried devotees.

I can sympathize with him, however, for criticism has not helped him to be true. Criticism of the formal kind and spontaneous expression are always at war, like the old man and the youth. They may politely conceal it, but they are mutually destructive.

Old men naturally love the past; the books they read are the masterpieces; the great men are all dying off, they say; the young man should treat lofty and universal themes, as they used to do. These localisms are petty. These truths are disturbing. Youth annoys them. Spontaneousness is formlessness, and the criticism that does not call for the abstract and the ideal and the beautiful is leading to destruction, these critics say.

And yet there is a criticism which helps, which tends to keep a writer at his best; but such criticism recognizes the dynamic force of a literature, and tries to spy out tendencies. This criticism to-day sees that local color means national character, and is aiding the young writer to treat his themes in the best art.

I assert it is the most natural thing in the world for a man to love his native land and his native, intimate surroundings. Born into a web of circumstances, enmeshed in common life, the youthful artist begins to think. All the associations of that childhood and the love-life of youth combine to make that web of common affairs, threads of silver and beads of gold; the near-at-hand things are the dearest and sweetest after all.

As the reader will see, I am using local color to mean something more than a forced study of the picturesque scenery of a State.

Local color in a novel means that it has such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native.

It means a statement of life as indigenous as the plant-growth. It means that the picturesque shall not be seen by the author,—that every tree and bird and mountain shall be dear and companionable and necessary, not picturesque; the tourist cannot write the local novel.

From this it follows that local color must not be put in for the sake of local color. It must go in, it *will* go in, because the writer naturally carries it with him half unconsciously, or conscious only of its significance, its interest to him.

He must not stop to think whether it will interest the reader or not. He must be loyal to himself, and put it in because he loves it. If he is an artist, he will make his reader feel it through his own emotion.

What we should stand for is not universality of theme, but beauty and strength of treatment, leaving the writer to choose his theme because he loves it.

Here is the work of the critic. Recognizing that the theme is beyond his control, let him aid the young writer to delineate simply and with unwavering strokes. Even here the critic can do little, if he is possessed of the idea that the young writer of to-day should model upon Addison or Macaulay or Swift.[1]

There are new criterions to-day in writing as in painting, and individual expression is the aim. The critic can do much to aid a young writer to *not* copy an old master or any other master. Good criticism can aid him to be vivid and simple and unhackneyed in his technique, the subject is his own affair.

I agree with him who says, Local art must be raised to the highest levels in its expression; but in aiding this perfection of technique we must be careful not to cut into the artist's spontaneity. To apply ancient dogmas of criticism to our life and literature would be benumbing to [the] artist and fatal to his art.

3. Bret Harte, "The Rise of the 'Short Story'" (1899)

[Though born in New York and raised in Brooklyn, Bret Harte (1836-1902) is best known for his stories of the American West, an association that began when he moved there at age seventeen. In 1857 he began his literary career as an editorial assistant at the weekly newspaper, *Northern Californian*, moving in 1860 to San Francisco and

1 Joseph Addison (1672-1719), English essayist and poet; Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59), English poet, historian, essayist, and politician; Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Anglo-Irish satirist, poet, essayist, and the author of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

writing first for the *Golden Era* and then, in 1864, for the *Californian*, which he also co-edited. During the 1860s Harte published a number of stories collected in the volume *The Lost Galleon and Other Tales* (1867), and in 1865 he edited *Outcroppings: An Anthology of California Verse*. By 1868 he had advanced to the position of editor in chief of the prestigious literary magazine, *Overland Monthly*, to which he contributed numerous poems, stories, and book reviews; in that same year he won a prestigious $10,000 contract for being the most promising writer in America. Harte published another collection of stories, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, in 1870, and one year later relocated to Boston permanently. This move inaugurated a marked decline in his fortunes and literary reputation. His contract was not renewed because he failed to produce enough new stories and poems, so Harte turned to the lecture circuit, as well as to novels and plays, to augment his income, though none brought him the success that he attained in his early career. The text of this selection is from *The Cornhill Magazine*, July 1899, 1-8.]

As it has been the custom of good-natured reviewers to associate the present writer with the origin of the American 'short story,' he may have a reasonable excuse for offering the following reflections—partly the result of his own observations during the last thirty years, and partly from his experience in the introduction of this form of literature to the pages of the 'Western Magazine,' of which he was editor at the beginning of that period. But he is far from claiming the invention, or of even attributing its genesis to that particular occasion. The short story was familiar enough in form in America during the early half of the century; perhaps the proverbial haste of American life was some inducement to its brevity. It had been the medium through which some of the most characteristic work of the best American writers had won the approbation of the public. Poe—a master of the art, as yet unsurpassed—had written; Longfellow[1] and Hawthorne had lent it the graces of the English classics. But it was not the American short story of to-day. It was not characteristic of American life, American habits nor American thought. It was not vital and instinct with the experience and observation of the average American; it made no attempt to follow his reasoning or to understand his peculiar form of expression—which it was apt to consider vulgar; it had no sympathy with those dramatic contrasts and surprises which are the wonders of American civilization; it took no account of the modifications of envi-

1 Though primarily known as a poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82) also published a piece of prose fiction about New England village life in 1849, *Kavanagh: A Tale*, which is a precursor of local color fiction.

ronment and of geographical limitations; indeed, it knew little of American geography. Of all that was distinctly American it was evasive—when it was not apologetic. And even when graced by the style of the best masters, it was distinctly provincial.

It would be easier to trace the causes which produced this than to assign any distinct occasion or period for the change. What was called American literature was still limited to English methods and upon English models. The best writers either wandered far afield for their inspiration, or, restricted to home material, were historical or legendary; artistically contemplative of their own country, but seldom observant. Literature abode on a scant fringe of the Atlantic seaboard, gathering the drift from other shores, and hearing the murmur of other lands rather than the voices of its own; it was either expressed in an artificial treatment of life in the cities, or, as with Irving, was frankly satirical of provincial social ambition. There was much 'fine' writing; there were American Addisons, Steeles, and Lambs—there were provincial 'Spectators' and 'Tatlers.' The sentiment was English. Even Irving in the pathetic sketch of 'The Wife' echoed the style of 'Rosamund Grey.'[1] There were sketches of American life in the form of the English Essayists, with no attempt to understand the American character. The literary man had little sympathy with the rough and half-civilised masses who were making his country's history; if he used them at all it was as a foil to bring into greater relief his hero of the unmistakable English pattern. In his slavish imitation of the foreigner, he did not, however, succeed in retaining the foreigner's quick appreciation of novelty. It took an Englishman to first develop the humour and picturesqueness of American or 'Yankee' dialect, but Judge Haliburton succeeded better in reproducing 'Sam Slick's' speech than his character.[2] Dr. Judd's 'Margaret'[3]—one of the earlier American stories—although a vivid picture of New England farm life and

1 *The Tatler* (1709-11) and *The Spectator* (1711-12) were magazines published in London by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. English essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) published his short prose tale, *Rosamund Grey*, in 1798; Harte argues that Washington Irving's story, "The Wife," published in the collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819-20), is modeled after Lamb's tale.

2 Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865) was a Canadian judge and author who is chiefly known for his creation of Sam Slick, an itinerant Yankee clock salesman, who is the protagonist of his satiric work *The Clockmaker; or, The Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick of Slickville* (1836).

3 Unitarian minister, novelist, and friend of Henry David Thoreau, Sylvester Judd (1813-53) is the author of the novel *Margaret: A Tale of the Real and the Ideal, Blight and Bloom* (1845).

strongly marked with local colour, was in incident and treatment a mere imitation of English rural tragedy. It would, indeed, seem that while the American people had shaken off the English yoke in Government, politics, and national progression, while they had already startled the old world with invention and originality in practical ideas, they had never freed themselves from the trammels of English literary precedent. The old sneer 'Who reads an American book?' might have been answered by another: 'There are no American books.'

But while the American literary imagination was still under the influence of English tradition, an unexpected factor was developing to diminish its power. It was *Humour*—of a quality as distinct and original as the country and civilisation in which it was developed. It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or 'story,' and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in the 'country store,' and finally at public meetings in the mouths of 'stump orators.' Arguments were clinched, and political principles illustrated, by 'a funny story.' It invaded even the camp meeting and pulpit. It at last received the currency of the public press. But wherever met it was so distinctly original and novel, so individual and characteristic, that it was at once known and appreciated abroad as 'an American story.' Crude at first, it received a literary polish in the press, but its dominant quality remained. It was concise and condense, yet suggestive. It was delightfully extravagant—or a miracle of understatement. It voiced not only the dialect, but the habits of thought of a people or locality. It gave a new interest to slang. From a paragraph of a dozen lines it grew into a half column, but always retaining its conciseness and felicity of statement. It was a foe to prolixity of any kind, it admitted no fine writing nor affectation of style. It went directly to the point. It was burdened by no conscientiousness; it was often irreverent; it was devoid of all moral responsibility—but it was original! By degrees it developed character with its incident, often, in a few lines, gave a striking photograph of a community or a section, but always reached its conclusion without an unnecessary word. It became—and still exists—as an essential feature of newspaper literature. It was the parent of the American 'short story.'

But although these beginnings assumed more of a national character than American serious or polite literature, they were still purely comic, and their only immediate result was the development of a number of humourists in the columns of the daily press—all possessing the dominant national quality with a certain individuality of their own. For a while it seemed as if they were losing the faculty of story-telling in the elaboration of eccentric character—chiefly used as a vehicle for smart sayings, extravagant incident, or political satire. They were eagerly received by the public and, in their day, were immensely

popular, and probably were better known at home and abroad than the more academic but less national humourists of New York or Boston. The national note was always struck even in their individual variations, and the admirable portraiture of the shrewd and humorous showman in 'Artemus Ward'[1] survived his more mechanical bad spelling. Yet they did not invade the current narrative fiction; the short and long story-tellers went with their old-fashioned methods, their admirable morals, their well-worn sentiments, their colourless heroes and heroines of the first ranks of provincial society. Neither did social and political convulsions bring anything new in the way of Romance. The Mexican war gave us the delightful satires of Hosea Bigelow,[2] but no dramatic narrative. The anti-slavery struggle before the War of the Rebellion produced a successful partisan political novel—on the old lines—with only the purely American characters of the negro 'Topsy,' and the New England 'Miss Ophelia.'[3] The War itself, prolific as it was of poetry and eloquence—was barren of romance, except for Edward Everett Hale's artistic and sympathetic *The Man without a Country*. The tragedies enacted, the sacrifices offered, not only on the battle-field but in the division of families and households; the conflict of superb Quixotism and reckless gallantry against Reason and Duty fought out in quiet border farmhouses and plantations; the reincarnation of Puritan and Cavalier in a wild environment of trackless wastes, pestilential swamps and rugged mountains; the patient endurance of both the conqueror and the conquered: all these found no echo in the romance of the period. Out of the battle smoke that covered half a continent drifted into the pages of magazines shadowy but correct figures of blameless virgins of the North—heroines or fashionable belles—habited as hospital nurses, bearing away the deeply wounded but more deeply misunderstood Harvard or Yale graduate lover who had rushed to bury his broken heart in the conflict. It seems almost

1 Artemus Ward was the pseudonym of author and lecturer Charles Farrar Browne (1834-67), who created the Ward persona initially in a fake letter to the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* in 1858, followed by a series of letters. Their success led to his appointment as the managing editor of *Vanity Fair* in 1861, where he continued his sketches "written by" Ward and soon began to deliver comic lectures in the Ward persona that were a parody of serious lectures of the time and which influenced Mark Twain's career as a lecturer. Browne's successful collection, *Artemus Ward: His Book*, was published in 1862.

2 Harte misspells the name of James Russell Lowell's character, Hosea Biglow, who appeared as the title character in *The Biglow Papers* (1848), a satire of the Mexican-American War written in Yankee dialect.

3 Topsy and Miss Ophelia are two characters in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

incredible that, until the last few years, nothing worthy of that tremendous episode has been preserved by the pen of the romancer.

But if the war produced no characteristic American story it brought the literary man nearer his work. It opened to him distinct conditions of life in his own country, of which he had no previous conception; it revealed communities governed by customs and morals unlike his own, yet intensely human and American. The lighter side of some of these he had learned from the humourists before alluded to; the grim realities of war and the stress of circumstances had suddenly given them a pathetic or dramatic reality. Whether he had acquired this knowledge of them with a musket or a gilded strap on his shoulder, or whether he was later a peaceful 'carpet-bagger'[1] into the desolate homes of the south and south-west, he knew something personally of their romantic and picturesque value in story. Many cultivated aspirants for literature, as well as many seasoned writers for the press, were among the volunteer soldiery. Again, the composition of the army was heterogeneous: regiments from the West rubbed shoulders with regiments from the East; spruce city clerks hobnobbed with backwoodsmen, and the student fresh from college shared his rations with the half-educated western farmer. The Union, for the first time, recognised its component parts; the natives knew each other. The literary man must have seen heroes and heroines where he had never looked for them, situations that he had never dreamt of. Yet it is a mortifying proof of the strength of inherited literary traditions, that he never dared until quite recently to make a test of them. It is still more strange that he should have waited for the initiative to be taken by a still more crude, wild, and more western civilization—that of California!

The gold discovery had drawn to the Pacific slope of the continent a still more heterogeneous and remarkable population. The immigration of 1849 and 1850 had taken farmers from the plough, merchants from their desks, and students from their books, while every profession was represented in the motley crowd of goldseekers. Europe and her colonies had contributed to swell these adventurers—for adventurers they were whatever their purpose; the risks were great, the journey long and difficult—the nearest came from a distance of over a thousand miles; that the men were necessarily pre-equipped with courage, faith and endurance was a foregone conclusion. They were mainly young; a grey-haired man was a curiosity in the mines in the early days, and an object of rude respect and reverence. They were

1 Carpetbaggers were Northerners who moved to the South during the period of Reconstruction (1865-77).

consequently free from the trammels of precedent or tradition in arranging their lives and making their rude homes. There was a singular fraternity in this ideal republic into which all men entered free and equal. Distinction of previous position or advantages were unknown, even record and reputation for ill or good were of little benefit or embarrassment to the possessor; men were accepted for what they actually were, and what they could do in taking their part in the camp or settlement. The severest economy, the direst poverty, the most menial labour carried no shame nor disgrace with it; individual success brought neither envy nor jealousy. What was one man's fortune to-day might be the luck of another to-morrow. Add to this Utopian simplicity of the people, the environment of magnificent scenery, a unique climate, and a vegetation that was marvellous in its proportions and spontaneity of growth; let it be further considered that the strongest relief was given to this picture by its setting among the crumbling ruins of early Spanish possession—whose monuments still existed in Mission and Presidio, and whose legitimate Castilian descendants still lived and moved in picturesque and dignified contrast to their energetic invaders and it must be admitted that a condition of romantic and dramatic possibilities was created unrivalled in history.

But the earlier literature of the Pacific slope was, like that of the Atlantic seaboard, national and characteristic only in its humour. The local press sparkled with wit and satire, and, as in the East, developed its usual individual humourists. Of these should be mentioned the earliest pioneers of Californian humour Lieut. Derby,[1] a U.S. army engineer officer, author of a series of delightful extravagances known as the 'Squibob Papers,' and the later and universally known 'Mark Twain,' who contributed 'The Jumping Frog of Calaveras' to the columns of the weekly press. 'The San Francisco News Letter,' whose whilom contributor, Major Bierce,[2] has since written some of the most graphic romances of the Civil War; 'The Golden Era,' in which the present

1 George Horatio Derby (1823-61) was a military engineer and early California humorist who, under the pen names of "John P. Squibob" and "John Phoenix," wrote articles for the San Francisco *Herald*, *California Pioneer* magazine, and the San Diego *Herald* that satirized the pretenses of high society. In 1855 he published *Phoenixiana, or, Sketches and Burlesques*.

2 Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914) left a career in the US Army in 1866 to settle in San Francisco, where he began to publish fiction and journalistic commentary in such newspapers and periodicals as *The San Francisco News Letter*, *The Argonaut*, *Overland Monthly*, *The Californian*, and *The Wasp*. His stories of the Civil War include "Chickamauga" (1889), "An Occurence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1890), and "Killed at Resaca" (1891).

writer published his earlier sketches, and 'The Californian,' to which, as editor, in burlesque imitation of the enterprise of his journalistic betters, he contributed 'The Condemned Novels,' were the foremost literary weeklies. These were all more or less characteristically American, but it was again remarkable that the more literary, romantic, and imaginative romances had no national flavour. The better remembered serious work in the pages of the only literary magazine 'The Pioneer,' was a romance of spiritualism and psychological study, and a poem on the Chandos picture of Shakespeare![1]

With this singular experience before him, the present writer was called upon to take the editorial control of the 'Overland Monthly,' a much more ambitious magazine venture than had yet appeared in California. The best writers had been invited to contribute to its pages. But in looking over his materials on preparing the first number, he was discouraged to find the same notable lack of characteristic fiction. There were good literary articles, sketches of foreign travel, and some essays in description of the natural resources of California—excellent from a commercial and advertising view-point. But he failed to discover anything of that wild and picturesque life which had impressed him, first as a truant schoolboy, and afterwards as a youthful schoolmaster among the mining population. In this perplexity he determined to attempt to make good the deficiency himself. He wrote 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.' However far short it fell of his ideal and his purpose, he conscientiously believed that he had painted much that 'he saw, and part of which he was,' that his subject and characters were distinctly Californian, as was equally his treatment of them. But an unexpected circumstance here intervened. The publication of the story was objected to by both printer and publisher, virtually for not being in the conventional line of subject, treatment, and morals! The introduction of the abandoned outcast mother of the foundling 'Luck,' and the language used by the characters, received a serious warning and protest. The writer was obliged to use his right as editor to save his unfortunate contribution from oblivion. When it appeared at last, he saw with consternation that the printer and publisher had really voiced the local opinion; that the press of California was still strongly dominated by the old conservatism and conventionalism of the East, and that when 'The Luck of Roaring Camp' was not denounced as 'improper' and 'corrupting,' it was coldly received as being 'singular' and 'strange.' A still more extraordinary instance of the 'provincial

1 The Chandos Portrait (so named because it was once owned by the Dukes of Chandos) is an early seventeenth-century portrait of William Shakespeare, attributed to John Taylor and dated circa 1610. This painting is the founding picture of Britain's National Portrait Gallery.

note' was struck in the criticism of a religious paper that the story was strongly 'unfavourable to immigration' and decidedly unprovocative of the 'investment of foreign capital.' However, its instantaneous and cordial acceptance as a new departure by the critics of the Eastern States and Europe, enabled the writer to follow it with other stories of a like character. More than that, he was gratified to find a disposition on the part of his contributors to shake off their conservative trammels, and in an admirable and original sketch of a wandering circus attendant called 'Centrepole Bill,'[1] he was delighted to recognise and welcome a convert. The term 'imitators,' often used by the critics who, as previously stated, had claimed for the present writer the invention of this kind of literature, could not fairly apply to those who had cut loose from conventional methods, and sought to honestly describe the life around them, and he can only claim to have shown them that it could be done. How well it has since been done, what charm of individual flavour and style has been brought to it by such writers as Harris, Cable, Page, Mark Twain in 'Huckleberry Finn,' the author of the 'Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains,' and Miss Wilkins,[2] the average reader need not be told. It would seem evident, therefore, that the secret of the American short story was the treatment of characteristic American life, with absolute knowledge of its peculiarities and sympathy with its methods; with no fastidious ignoring of its habitual expression, or the inchoate poetry that may be found even hidden in its slang; with no moral determination except that which may be the legitimate outcome of the story itself; with no more elimination than may be necessary for the artistic conception, and never from the fear of the 'fetish' of conventionalism. Of such is the American short story of to-day—the germ of American literature to come.

1 "Centrepole Bill," by George F. Emery, was published in the January 1870 edition of the *Overland Monthly.*

2 American writers Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908), George Washington Cable (1844-1925), Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922), and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930), the latter an important New England regionalist writer best known for two collections of stories, *A Humble Romance and Other Stories* (1887) and *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (1891). *Prophet of the Great Smokey Mountains* (1885) is a novel about Tennessee mountain life by Mary Noailles Murfree.

Appendix C: Selected Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett

[Letter writing was, to those of Jewett's social class and generation, both an obligation and a responsibility. One kept one's friends and family apprised of the shape and tenor of daily life and shared ideas, affections, and reminiscences. Written over a period of four decades, Jewett's letters are both immediate and informative, their tone both personal and relaxed. Even when discussing literature, her own writing is never self-consciously literary. One hears instead her appreciation as a reader for the pleasures literature grants, as well as her openness to, and genuine delight in, the talents of others.

The letters excerpted below are all drawn from the 1911 edition of the *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, edited by Annie Fields and published in Boston by the Houghton Mifflin Company. They include an early letter that discusses the model for the character of Captain Elijah Tilley in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, as well as some of Jewett's rare statements about the craft of writing, both in musings about Flaubert and in advice she gave to the young Willa Cather about how to access her own artistic inspiration as she embarked on her career as one of the United States's most important twentieth-century novelists.]

1. To Annie Fields (June 1885)

Such a hot and agreeable day as yesterday was! We played on the beach at Wells, but not quite so hard as at York,[1] the sun being hotter. I got pretty tired, but enjoyed it all vastly, and met with many old and fond friends at the fish-houses,—R—, M— and F—, whom I wrote the story about, and old D— B—, who can't go out fishing any more, so that he sits at home and *knits stockings* and thinks on his early days as an able seaman in foreign parts. His wife died two or three years ago and he calls her "Poor dear!" when he talks about her.[2] And there was big C.D. and big H.R., who pulled him out of the waves in an adverse squall at the Banks[3] once, so that they are famous pals;

1 Wells and York are two coastal villages in southern Maine directly east and not far from Jewett's home in South Berwick.

2 The model for Captain Elijah Tilley in Chapter 20, "Along Shore," of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

3 The Grand Banks, a group of underwater plateaus on the northeast American continental shelf, are noted for being one of the richest fishing grounds in the world.

Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) from *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton, 1911).

all the old fishermen whom I have known since these many years; and A—and L— P— and younger fry, who were also cordial and yet not *so* dear. I lagged along from one fish-house door to the next, and thought I wasn't going to see D— B—, the knitter, but early in the afternoon he rolled along as if he trod a quarter-deck all the way, and mentioned after a time that he saw me driving down—he saw a team and *got his glass* and found out it was I. My heart was quite touched when I found that he hadn't been over to the moorings but once before this spring! I don't think from the looks of him that he will be missing "Poor dear" a great while longer. Yet he asked for some good books of stories, *detective ones*, none of your lovesick kind, which he couldn't go! I must betake me to Wells again before long with a selection of literary offerings, G— H—, the elder, being a great reader, but of another stamp and really one of the best-informed men I ever knew, never forgetting anything apparently; and when I tried to tell him about being at St. Augustine, he told me the Indian names at the

Annie Adams Fields (1834-1915) from *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton, 1911).

Fort,[1] and much else that had slipped my mind. The drive home was as lovely as it could be, the country so green and the farms all so tidy, and the sheep and cattle thick in the pastures, with such a sunset across all the western sky.

This morning I have been to church, and this afternoon I rested and read, chiefly the "Alchemist,"[2] which is a great story, all the early part of it. I think that Balzac got tired of it toward the end—there

1 St. Augustine, in northeast Florida, was founded by the Spanish is 1565 and is the oldest port in the continental United States. The name of Fort Mose, North America's first free and legally sanctioned black community, is believed to be of Indian origin.

2 *The Alkahest, or The House of Claes*, part of *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, was published by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) in 1834.

where he makes Margaret regain her lost fortune over and over, as a lobster grows a new claw.

2. From a letter to Annie Fields (12 October 1890)

I read "Madame Bovary"[1] all last evening, though I only took it up for a few moments and meant to do some writing afterward. It is quite wonderful how great a book Flaubert makes of it. People talk about dwelling upon trivialities and commonplaces in life, but a master writer gives everything weight, and makes you feel the distinction and importance of it, and count it upon the right or the wrong side of a life's account. That is one reason why writing about simple country people takes my time and thought. But I should make too long a letter for this short morning. Flaubert, who sees so far into the shadows of life, may "dwell" and analyze and reflect as much as he pleases with the trivial things of life; the woes of Hamlet absorb our thoughts no more than the silly wavering gait of this Madame Bovary, who is uninteresting, ill-bred, and without the attraction of rural surroundings. But the very great pathos of the book to me, is not the sin of her, but the thought, all the time, if she *could* have had a little brightness and prettiness of taste in the dull doctor, if she could have taken what there was in that dull little village! She is such a lesson to dwellers in country towns, who drift out of relation to their surroundings, not only social, but the very companionships of nature, unknown to them.

3. From a letter to Annie Fields (1899 or 1890)

Dearest,—The letter by Mr. Collyer[2] was from a person who sought to know my opinion of the novel of the future! But he never will.

I copied for him those two wonderful bits of Flaubert,—"Écrire la vie ordinaire comme on écrit l'histoire"; and the other, "Ce n'est pas de faire rire—mais d'agir à la façon de la nature, c'est-à-dire de faire rêver."[3] I keep these pinned up on the little drawers at the back of the secretary, for a constant reminder.

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1 Gustave Flaubert (1821-80) published *Madame Bovary* in 1857.

2 Robert Collyer (1823-1912), an American Unitarian clergyman known for his anti-slavery principles and for his talents as a pulpit orator, was a close friend of both Jewett and Fields.

3 "To write ordinary life as one writes history" and "It is not to cause laughter—but to act in the way of nature, which is to say, to cause one to dream." [Editor's translation]

4. To Willa Sibert Cather (27 November 1908)

My dear Willa,—I was glad to get your letter last night, and I was sorry to miss the drive to the station and a last talk about the story and other things; but I was too tired—"spent quite bankrupt!" It takes but little care about affairs, and almost less true pleasure, to make me feel overdone, and I have to be careful—it is only stupid and disappointing, but *there it is*, as an old friend of mine often says dolefully. And I knew that I was disappointing you, besides disappointing and robbing myself, which made it all the harder. It would have been such a good piece of a half hour! Emerson[1] was very funny once, Mrs. Fields has told me, when he said to a friend, "You formerly bragged of ill-health, sir!" But indeed I don't brag, I only deplore and often think it is a tiresome sort of mortification. I begin to think this is just what makes old age so trying to many persons. It seemed a very long little journey, and I could hardly sit up in my place in the car. I have never been very strong, but always capable of "great pulls."

I expect to be here until Monday the seventh, unless dear Mrs. Fields should need me. I have just had a most dear and cheerful note from her, and we spoke by telephone last evening. She wrote me about the pink roses.

And now I wish to tell you—the first of this letter being but a preface—with what deep happiness and recognition I have read the "McClure" story,[2]—night before last I found it with surprise and delight. It made me feel very near to the writer's young and loving heart. You have drawn your two figures of the wife and her husband with unerring touches and wonderful tenderness for her. It makes me the more sure that you are far on your road toward a fine and long story of very high class. The lover is as well done as he could be when a woman writes in the man's character,—it must always, I believe, be something of a masquerade. I think it is safer to write about him as you did about the others, and not try to be he! And you could almost have done it as yourself—a woman could love her in that same protecting way—a woman could even care enough to wish to take her away from such a life, by some means or other. But oh, how close—how tender—how true the feeling is! The sea air blows through the very letters on the page. Do not hurry too fast in these early winter days,—a quiet hour is worth more to you than anything you can do in it.

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1 New England transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82).

2 Cather's story, "On the Gull's Road," appeared in *McClure's Magazine* in December 1908.

5. To Willa Sibert Cather (13 December 1908)

148 Charles Street, Boston, Mass.

My dear Willa,—I have been thinking about you and hoping that things are going well. I cannot help saying what I think about your writing and its being hindered by such incessant, important, responsible work as you have in your hands now.[1] I do think that it is impossible for you to work so hard and yet have your gifts mature as they should—when one's first working power has spent itself nothing ever brings it back just the same, and I do wish in my heart that the force of this very year could have gone into three or four stories. In the "Troll-Garden"[2] the Sculptor's Funeral stands alone a head higher than the rest, and it is to that level you must hold and take for a starting-point. You are older now than that book in general; you have been living and reading and knowing new types; but if you don't keep and guard and mature your force, and above all, have time and quiet to perfect your work, you will be writing things not much better than you did five years ago. This you are anxiously saying to yourself! but I am wondering how to get at the right conditions. I want you to be surer of your backgrounds,—you have your Nebraska life,—a child's Virginia, and now an intimate knowledge of what we are pleased to call the "Bohemia" of newspaper and magazine-office life. These are uncommon equipment, but you don't see them yet quite enough from the outside,—you stand right in the middle of each of them when you write, without having the standpoint of the looker-on who takes them each in their relations to letters, to the world. Your good schooling and your knowledge of "the best that has been thought and said in the world," as Matthew Arnold[3] put it, have helped you, but these you wish and need to deepen and enrich still more. You must find a quiet place near the best companions (not those who admire and wonder at everything one does, but those who know the good things with delight!). You do need reassurance,—every artist does!—but you need still more to feel "responsible for the state of your conscience" (your literary conscience, we can just now limit that quotation to), and you need to dream your dreams and go on to new and more shining ideals, to be aware of "the

1 Cather was the managing editor of *McClure's* in 1908.

2 *The Troll Garden*, Cather's collection of short stories, appeared in 1905.

3 English poet and critic Matthew Arnold (1822-88) wrote in the 1873 Preface to *Literature and Dogma* that culture is "acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit." Jewett substitutes "thought" for "known."

gleam"[1] and to follow it; your vivid, exciting companionship in the office must not be your audience, you must find your own quiet centre of life, and write from that to the world that holds offices, and all society, all Bohemia; the city, the country—in short, you must write to the human heart, the great consciousness that all humanity goes to make up. Otherwise what might be strength in a writer is only crudeness, and what might be insight is only observation; sentiment falls to sentimentality—you can write about life, but never write life itself. And to write and work on this level, we must live on it—we must at least recognize it and defer to it at every step. We must be ourselves, but we must be our best selves. If we have patience with cheapness and thinness, as Christians must, we must know that it *is* cheapness and not make believe about it. To work in silence and with all one's heart, that is the writer's lot; he is the only artist who must be a solitary, and yet needs the widest outlook upon the world. But you have been growing I feel sure in the very days when you felt most hindered, and this will be counted to you. You need to have time to yourself and time to read and add to your recognitions. I do not know when a letter has grown so long and written itself so easily, but I have been full of thought about you. You will let me hear again from you before long?

1 In his 1807 poem, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," British Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850) laments the loss of his childhood innocence in the lines "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (57-58).

Appendix D: Reviews of The Country of the Pointed Firs

1. *Overland Monthly* (29 January 1897): 106

Mrs. Jewett's last book is as good as the rest cure. After living with her among the old fashioned, easy-going fisher-folk of a little Maine village through two hundred pages, one is ready to go back to the bustle of the city thankful for even so short a vacation. There is no attempt at a story in the work. The tale runs along in a rambling sort of a way, halting from time to time to make the acquaintance of a new friend or digressing to take a short excursion among the sunny islands that line the coast. There are bits of gossip, amusing and pathetic; life histories told in a sentence, glimpses of lovemaking and funerals, and peeps in upon family skeletons. The book is enjoyable from cover to cover, and will find a place for itself in many hearts.

2. *Atlantic Monthly* 79 (February 1897): 17–19

It has been a pleasure, repeated at intervals the past few years, to have in convenient form collections of Miss Sarah Orne Jewett's stories, but the pleasure is heightened at this time in the appearance of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Houghton) by the light thread of identity of place and character on which the stories are strung. Miss Jewett has, in effect, made a seacoast of her own, a mirage lifted just above the horizon of actual land, and peopled it with figures that are images of reality, also. She herself moves among them, and her warm sympathy is the breath of life which animates them. Her art has devised no more enchanted country, or given a more human substance to the creatures of her imagination. The book has the freshness of *Deephaven* with the mellowness of matured power.

3. *The Critic* (13 February 1897): 110

"The Country of the Pointed Firs" illustrates anew the fact that a work of art can be produced from very tenuous material. The subject-matter of Miss Jewett's latest volume may be said to be practically non-existent. Certainly it is a negligible quantity when compared to

the skill which is exercised upon it. To make so good a book upon so slight a theme is in reality to create it, and the creation is a comely thing. The little volume will be found dignified, gracious and restful. If it is not able bodied, it is at least strong in spirit. The author tells the story of a seaside summer on the coast of Maine. She lives with a fine old countrywoman, who is a gatherer and dispenser of herbs; she talks to an old sea-captain of infirm but interesting mind; she sails out to the island where her landlady's mother lives, accompanies her good friends to a family reunion, listens to another old captain as he talks of his dead wife, and leaves the quiet village with regret when autumn comes. These are the homely events of the book. The thread upon which they are strung is the writer's fine and constant appreciation of whatever is individual and excellent in nature and humanity as it lies about her. We do not see that Dennett [*sic*] Landing is absorbing, but that Miss Jewett is absorbed. Her interest is unfailing, and she invests each incident for the reader with the same gentle glamour which it obviously has for herself.

It is impossible not to compare "The Country of the Pointed Firs" with "Deephaven," that other record of a seaside summer with which the author began her career as a maker of books. In the earlier volume, the chronicler is a little more eager, more positive, more convinced of the romance of her seaport, and more strenuous in setting it forth. She showed the same appreciative spirit, but demanded more substance upon which to exercise it. The years which have ripened her talent and perfected her workmanship have made her less and less exacting as to material, and in contrast to the feverish search after some new thing which current literature in general reveals, such repose and content are wonderfully refreshing. If Miss Jewett has not a bunch of orchids to offer, she will at least present to us some blades of grass with an inimitable grace. She may, like Virgil's shepherd,[1] sing a slender song, but her vocalization is beyond reproach and almost beyond praise.

4. *The Nation* (15 April 1897): 228

As the best material for stories may be wasted by unskilled hands, so the plain, the meagre, the commonplace, may be used to marvellous

1 An allusion to Virgil's *Eclogues* 6. 4-7 (37 BCE), in which a shepherd who wants to sing of "battles and kings" is counseled by the "Cynthian God" (Phoebus or Apollo) to keep his song within the limits of his rural knowledge because it "Beseems a shepherd-wight to feed fat sheep, / But sing a slender song."

advantage by the masters of the craft. Miss Jewett's 'Country of the Pointed Firs' is a case in point. All she has to work on is a fishing village on the Maine coast, and an old woman who grows herbs and maintains a sort of amateur dispensary. The casual observer could see little of interest here, the average writer could make little of what he sees; but the acute and sympathetic observer, the exceptional writer, comes on the scene, looks about, thinks, writes, and behold! a fascinating story. Dunnet appears one of the most interesting spots on the face of the earth, and the centre of interest is the herb-garden. Life radiates from it, flows about it, and its aromatic scents blend delightfully with the salt of the sea. The ponderous figure of Mrs. Almira Todd, reticent yet garrulous, dominates the town's society and history, and her capable hand holds and spins and cuts the thread of destiny. Thus by a centralization of interest which seems but is not an easy process, we get a story instead of a series of sketches, a complete and satisfactory impression of what the author meant to do and accomplished. To defraud neither the imagination nor reason of the reader is the plain duty of all story-tellers, a duty which, however, only the very best can be trusted to fulfil.

5. Alice Brown,[1] *Book Buyer* (15 October 1897): 249-50

The Country of the Pointed Firs is the flower of a sweet, sane knowledge of life, and an art so elusive that it smiles up at you while you pull aside the petals, vainly probing its heart. The title is exacting, prophetic; a little bit of genius of which the book has to be worthy or come very "tardy off."[2] And the book is worthy. Here is the idyllic atmosphere of country life, unbroken by one jarring note; even the attendant sadness and pathos of being are resolved into that larger harmony destined to elude our fustian words. It is a book made to defy the praise ordinarily given to details; it must be regarded *au large*. For it takes hold of the very centre of things. The pointed firs have their roots in the ground of national being; they are index fingers to the stars. A new region unrolls before you like a living map, whereof The Bowden Reunion and Captain Littlepage are twin mountain heights, warm in sunshine and swept by favoring airs. The Reunion indeed bears a

1 Alice Brown (1856-1948) was a local color novelist and short story writer whose *Meadow Grass: Tales of New England Life* (1895) and *Tiverton Tales* (1899) featured dialect stories set in New Hampshire.

2 To come "tardy off" means to be done badly. The phrase comes from *Hamlet* III.ii.24.

larger significance than its name. It stirs in us the dormant clan-spirit; we understand ancestor-worship, the continuity of being. All the delicate humor, the broidery of the day, "like fringe upon the petticoat"—the pictorial pies, the alien guest with her pseudo-likeness to "Cousin Pa'lina Bowden about the forehead," the woman who "wouldn't get back in a day if she was as far out o' town as she was out o' tune"—this thrills you with a fine and delicate pleasure; but meanwhile your mind marches grandly with the Bowdens, you throb like them with pride of race, you acquiesce willingly in the sweet, loyal usages of domesticity. The conception has its tap-root in the solid earth; but Captain Littlepage's story of the unknown country "up north beyond the ice" takes hold on things remote: it breathes the awful chill and mysticism of the Ancient Mariner.[1] Here are the powers of the air portrayed with Miltonic grandeur.[2] Less tangible even than the denizens of the Beleaguered City,[3] they throng and press upon the mind, making void all proven experience. It is as strange and true a page out of the unseen possibilities of being as Kipling's story of the dead sea-snake.[4] It is not, moreover, the only hint of the inter-relations of known and unknown. Even the herbs in Mrs. Todd's garden could not all be classified. There was one that sent "out a penetrating odor late in the evening, after the dew had fallen, and the moon was high, and the cool air came up from the sea." You would not know that herb for a world of science. It is mystical as moly,[5] and so it shall remain.

Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett are as real as the earth. For pure fascination, Mrs. Todd can never expect to vie with her mother; she did "lurch about steppin' into a bo't"; it was not she who put forth the grave axiom that it was scarcely "advisable to maintain cats just on account of their havin' bob tails." But she is the colossal figure of a simple woman dowered with sorrow and loss, who set her feet firmly on the ground—

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1 An allusion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," published in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798.

2 "Miltonic grandeur" suggests the epic scope and sublimity of style in John Milton's blank verse poem, *Paradise Lost*, first published in a quarto edition in 1667.

3 "The Beleaguered City" refers to a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published in *Voices of the Night* in 1839. The "denizens" Brown alludes to are the ghosts in Longfellow's poem who encircle the city of Prague, only to flee with the sun's rising.

4 Rudyard Kipling's story "A Matter of Fact" was published in the volume *Many Inventions* in 1893.

5 According to Homer, it was the magical properties of *Allium moly* (otherwise known as ornamental Allium, or flowering onion) that allowed Odysseus to enter Circe's lair unharmed.

To crush the snake and spare the worm,[1]

who made personal grief no reason for bickering with the universe, whose moral life went sanely with the stars, and whose nostrils were delighted with sweet savors from the earth which had denied her. Too often we are taught that great grief and finer feeling are the concomitants of revolt; but it is the larger mind which links them to sweetness, serenity, and obedience. Here is quiet revelation of human tragedy, but none of that fierce rebellion through which individual suffering eats its own heart and the heart of the onlooking chorus. Even the self-exiled Joanna, pursued by the phantom of the unpardonable sin, cannot afflict us irremediably; for still she was surrounded, as with a sea, by faulty human love, and still, as we read, the tranquil company of the firs bids us be patient till her affliction shall be overpast.

To pluck the flowers of humor, quaint philosophy, and legend here is as hopeless as to make a Poyser anthology.[2] You are simply bewildered by the richness and life-giving balm of this herby garden. It is the acme of Miss Jewett's fine achievement, blending the humanity of the "Native of Winby" and the fragrance of the "White Heron."[3] No such beautiful and perfect work has been done for many years; perhaps no such beautiful work has ever been done in America.

1 A line from Robert Browning's poem, "The Italian in England," published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845).

2 "Mrs. Poyser" is a character in George Eliot's 1858 novel, *Adam Bede*. One of the most successful comic characters in English fiction, she is an outspoken, energetic, and larger-than-life figure who employs an exaggerated speech that draws upon similes from nature and from the domestic scene.

3 Jewett's "The Native of Winby" was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in May of 1891, while "A White Heron" first appeared in *A White Heron and Other Stories* (1886).

Appendix E: Profiles of Sarah Orne Jewett

1. Anonymous, "Miss Jewett," (January 1894)

The publication in the same season of the latest collection of Miss Jewett's stories[1] and an illustrated edition of her earliest book[2] gives opportunity for a glance at the growth in artistic skill of one of our most happily endowed writers. Twenty years have elapsed since the first of the sketches appeared which, with others strung upon a light thread of personal narrative, formed the little volume now gracefully illustrated. The drawings which Mr. and Mrs. Woodbury[3] have made for its decoration, it is not unfair to say, present in their variety and choice of subject the salient features of Miss Jewett's art with the delicacy of touch and the firmness of line which she is to-day disclosing in her maturer work. Figures, landscapes, interiors, all are delightfully expressive of Miss Jewett; but their fine drawing, vividness of portraiture, and reserve of force belong to the *Deephaven* which Miss Jewett might write to-day. The feeling is the same; it is the art which has become more definite and clear. The designs are pictures where the text is a sketch. As an example, how thoroughly satisfactory is the picture of Miss Brandon at her Piano, in which Mrs. Woodbury has caught Miss Jewett's sketch capitally, and filled it out! One exception should be made. Good as is the portrait of Mrs. Dockum, and admirably as Mrs. Woodbury has reproduced Miss Jewett's idea, the author's own portrait of Mrs. Dockum, as delineated in that excellent woman's address when introduced, is a bit of characterization as good as anything she is doing to-day. There are other passages in *Deephaven* which the reader will recall, equally humorous in conception and true in drawing. Such are those that portray the figures in the chapter "The Captains," the sketch of Mrs. Bonny in her search for a tumbler, the

1 *A Native of Winby, and Other Tales*. By Sarah Orne Jewett. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1893 [original note].

2 *Deephaven*. By Sarah Orne Jewett. Illustrated by Charles and Marcia Woodbury. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1894 [original note].

3 American painter Charles H. Woodbury (1864-1940), a contemporary and friend of John Singer Sargent and Childe Hassam, spent summers in Ogunquit, Maine painting and founding a successful summer art colony. South Berwick, Maine native, Susan Marcia Oakes Woodbury (1865-1913), married Charles, with whom she first studied art, in 1890. She is noted for her figural works—often of Dutch children—in pastel, watercolor, and oil.

meek widow with the appearance of a thin black beetle and a voice like the wail of the banshee, the funeral procession, and, in her various appearances, the carefully wrought Mrs. Kew. From time to time, and very often at that, the reader is surprised by the success with which a girl scarcely out of her teens caught the likenesses of these shore folk, and gave to her sketches a breadth as well as a refinement which seemed to come from careful training, yet really, we must believe, were the unerring product of a genuine gift of literary art illumined and warmed by an affectionate sympathy.

Miss Jewett tells us in her interesting preface—or rather reminds us, for she had been obliged to say it before—that her village and its people were not the simple result of camera work. The truthfulness, the fidelity to nature, and the frank, winning manner of the narrative easily persuaded readers that this young writer was innocently recording personal experience, and varying but slightly from actual fact. Much of this illusion was no doubt produced by the assumption of a sort of dual autobiographic character, but more, we think, by that frequent expression of delicate charity which was so refined and thoughtful, so instantaneous in its action when occasion arose, that the reader at once identified the writer with her creation, and, by a singular suppression of logic, believed her capable of doing what the character of the story-teller as delineated would have made impossible. Here was a most unconscious tribute to Miss Jewett's art; for art it is, of a high order, which shines clearly in *Deephaven*, and reconciles one readily to that immaturity which Miss Jewett herself, in her preface, half humorously deprecates.

It is perhaps not far out of the way to say that *Deephaven* accurately embodies creative girlhood, as Andersen's stories,[1] for instance, embody creative childhood. The book reproduces the angle of vision of that most elusive creature, the young girl, not as she is made by novelists, but as she is by nature, with all her capacity for enjoyment of life and her latent sense of responsibility, which turns into ready sympathy at a touch, and always discloses itself in a charity which is as sensitive as her delicately balanced nature can make it. Kitty Lancaster and Helen Denis look on this decayed gentility and sea-blown human life with laughing eyes, but they draw back at the least suspicion of laughing at the spectacle. For this reason the book is likely to have a long life, for it will appeal successively to generations that repeat the period for which it stands; and it will do this all the more surely because it

1 Danish author and poet Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75) is best known for his *Fairy Tales* (1835) which include "The Ugly Duckling," "The Little Mermaid," and "The Emperor's New Clothes."

reflects the vision of the young girl turned upon the outer world, and not turned in on herself.

It is natural for an author, when she is speaking of her work, to dwell upon those ethical considerations which underlie her purpose, and Miss Jewett speaks with a gentle earnestness of the impelling motive which sent *Deephaven* into the world; but we know well that in this instance, as in others, it was the delight of a beautiful art which made the book in its form possible. However critically the reader may intend to read it, as the early production of a writer with an assured position, he yields very soon to the charm of the narrative and the characterization, and recognizes through all the apparent naturalness the ease of the true artist. In the books which have followed *Deephaven* there have been at times expressions of a more conscious purpose of construction, and it has been apparent that Miss Jewett, aware of the somewhat fragmentary and sketchy character of her writing, has aimed at a more deliberate structure; but the naturalness, the direct look at life, the clear sense of the value of the moment, have always been her protection against an artificial method; and with an increase of experience has come also an access of strength, though this strength has been shown rather in a firmer conception of the contrasting pathos and humor of life than in any outburst of passion or kindling emotion.

The volume of short stories which stands latest in the honorable series is delightful by reason of the freshness of the several situations and the delicacy with which they are expressed. As we have intimated, it is situations rather than dramatic action with which Miss Jewett concerns herself, and situations especially which illustrate character. Thus, in the volume before us, "A Native of Winby" sets forth the return to his old village home of a man who has won fame; his appearance, large as life, in the little schoolhouse which knew his boyish inconspicuousness; and his encounter with a woman who, as a girl, had known the boy. It is indicative of the reserve of Miss Jewett, her nice sense of the limits of her art, that she does not resort to any conventional device of rounding out her story, and Mr. Laneway does not pair off with Abby Hender as an effective conclusion. Miss Jewett cares more for the real interest of the situation, for the working of such a nature as Mr. Laneway's in this half-egotistic, half-shamefaced return. "Decoration Day," again, as a story, could be told in a few lines, but as a reflection of a half-buried patriotic emotion it is of moving power. Rarely, we think, has this writer shown so well the fine reserve of her art. By the low tone in which all the scenes of this homely revival of patriotism are painted, she has touched the quiet, responsive passion. "The Passing of Sister Barsett" has a witty climax, but, after all, it is the inimitable humor and pathos of the conversation

between the two women which make the story a patch of New England life; and if there had been no witty turn, the reader still would have had his half-hour's worth. "The Flight of Betsey Lane" is the most complete story in the book, but it is a tale of adventure illustrative of character, and never does the reader lose his interest in the quaint figure who has the delightful escapade from any strong attraction to the issue of the story. In "The Failure of David Berry," the absence of any plot is made more conspicuous by the presence of a little shadowy personage who, in the hands of an artist intent on a story, would have emerged out of the shadow into some sort of fairy godmother's sunshine. As it is, she goes back weeping into the obscurity from which she came, and, with scarcely a lineament for the reader to decipher, remains in his mind as one of the most real, most lifelike, of the few dramatis personae of the story. It would be hard to find a better illustration of the power of Miss Jewett's imaginative sympathy to call into being and give endurance to a fleeting image of human life.

The last two sketches in the book have a special interest by their intimation, which we have pointed out before, of a direction which Miss Jewett's art may take in the way of subjects. In her previous collection of short stories, "The Luck of the Bogans" was an excursion into the field of Irish New England, and wholly successful, as it seemed to us; a little surprising, also, as showing how, when the writer left more familiar ground, she disclosed a vigor of handling which the material seemed to require. So here, in the graphic story "Between Mass and Vespers," where the persons are all American Irish, with true instinct she apprehends the nature of her material, and again uses her pen in the delineation of a rougher, ruder life; yet her inborn charity and refinement find a congenial subject in the fatherly priest. The last story in the book, "A Little Captive Maid," is a still greater success. Here she has made the central figure a young Irish girl, and has woven her fortunes with those of an invalid, willful New England sea-captain. This latter personage is one whom we could trust confidently in Miss Jewett's hands, as we remember the gallery of his companions painted by her; but if any one fancies that Miss Jewett is indebted for her success to a mere concentration of her art on a few types among which she had grown up, let him observe the speech and manner, and further still the nature, of Nora Connelly, and he will see that the artist who drew her might be trusted with any subject where her sympathy and insight had clear opportunity. This story, with its blending of the native and foreign, is as delicate and winning a study of life as any in which the New England character alone is depicted, and it invites the hope that Miss Jewett's art will include hereafter more of such suggestive contrasts.

Thus, our examination of these two books not only discloses a genuineness of gift, which has been developed by conscientious practice into an assurance of artistic power, the more confident in that it recognizes the scope of its effectiveness, but intimates also a widening of the field of vision. It is scarcely to be expected that Miss Jewett will ever attain the constructive power which holds in the grasp a variety of complex activities and controls their energy, directing it to some conclusive end; but her imagination is strong to conceive a genuine situation, to illustrate it through varied character, to illuminate it with humor and dewy pathos; and as she extends the range of her characters, so she is likely to display even more invention in the choice of situations which shall give opportunity to those delightful characters who spring at her bidding from no one class, and even from no one nation. Especially do we hope that she will mark in the art of literature that elusive period of New England life through which we are passing, when so many streams of race are now opposing, now blending, now flowing side by side. She has caught and held firmly some phases of that life which are already historical. Let her record with equal art some phases of that life still in formation, and she will lay the foundations of a fresh fame.

[Source: *Atlantic Monthly* 73 (January 1894): 130-33]

2. Anonymous, "Pleasant Day With Miss Jewett. How the New England Authoress Lives in Quaint Old Berwick Town. Her House and Her Horses. An Ideal Summer Life Down on the Coast of Maine—Her Stories and Novels and How They Are Written" (August 1895)

The train did not stop at South Berwick. It was inconsiderate enough to go plunging on to Salmon Falls. And then there was the river to cross and a hill to climb, while the sky darkened with a Summer gale and the grass bent and the great trees creaked and snapped and the scudding clouds, gray with rain swept low over the darkening landscape.

There was a little country store perched high on a flight of steps above the roadway, and its owner, who had a flock of dark-eyed, dark-haired, pink-frocked midgets about him, spoke more French than English, as befitted one who had to do with the Canadian mill-hands in the factories along the river.

"Miss Sarah Jewett?" he repeated in reply to an inquiry; "everybody for miles around knows Miss Sarah. You keep straight up this street till you've passed two churches, then you'll come to 'the block' and oppo-

site the block is a great brown house. That's Miss Jewett's; you can't miss it, but anybody in the village can tell you."

Where She Lives

The rain came down in mad torrents. Above the splash and the dash of it sounded the jar of the river falls and the groanings of the trees that arched the village street as one drenched wanderer pushed forward through a world that had turned of a sudden to water and came half-blinded to "the block," and to the great brown house, hidden among ancient trees, which shelters one of New England's soundest, sweetest and most wholesome writers, and which is in itself of no inconsiderable interest, dating back as it does to the first half of the last century, and standing as one of the best examples of the best of the old colonial architecture.

The tall trees that bordered the walk drooped black and heavy with rain, but the face of the woman who stood in the broad paneled hall with its great doors at each end was cheery enough to make up for any imaginable lack of sunshine.

Did you ever know a writer who was like her books or who told you unconsciously in ten minutes how she wrote them? If you have felt the truth to New England life, that is yet not too bold, but has imagination to lighten it; the fidelity to details that is saved from harsh literalness by sentiment and a touch of humor, the philosophy that is at once keen and true and kindly; the outlook upon life that is far-seeing and yet smiles; if, in a word, you have had any perception of the woman beyond the ink in Miss Jewett's stories you will miss the usual disappointment that comes with the close view of a celebrity, if ever fortune takes you to old Berwick and the great brown house with its long past and its present of greater moment still.

There is a word that means much to me. It is "wholesome." Morbid art, morbid literature, morbid thought sprout like quick-growing, quick-dying fungi at the feverish end of this busy century. But it is the simple, the honest which lives, and somehow it sweeps away, like a breath of sea air, all doubts of their survival to see this slim little woman in her gardening dress, fresh from among her flowers, happy in her Summer life in her quaint country home.

I wonder if there is another such house in New England. I have seen many stately mansions that go back to the days before the Revolution—one in particular where General Gage[1] was quartered in old Danvers, a town which is linked by witch threads to Berwick, and one

1 Thomas Gage (1719-87) was a British general in command of the North American forces from 1763 to 1775.

with gambrel roof upon which a good dame and her cronies climbed to be out of reach of husbandly authority while they drank tea forbidden to patriots until the tax was removed. But I have never seen a living place at once so modem and so reminiscent of 1730 or days younger still.

In its great rooms, filled with old mahogany and warmed by huge tiled fireplaces, it would be easy to forget that the gundalows,[1] with their high pecked sails like great birds' wings, do not yet sail down the river from the landing wharves in fleets of tens and twenties to Portsmouth, with their loads of pine planks and boards to be exchanged for West India rum, tobacco and molasses, or for Russian iron, duck and cordage, or for such priceless old glass and silver and china as came from unknown ports and now peeps out wonderingly upon nineteenth century—or shall one almost begin to say twentieth century—cushions and pictures and bric-a-brac from their deep-set cupboards and shelves.

Artistic Treasures

"I found these things here," Miss Jewett says, "and I hope to leave them when I go into the unknown." If one had one's choice of ancestors it would be impossible to pick out better than those who chose the elaborate cornices, all carved by hand with infinite pains, and the high paneling of the parlors, and the broad window sills and the flowered wall paper, still bright and fresh, though of a pattern on which Marie Antoinette might have set the seal of her approval when she fitted up the little Trianon.[2]

City people who have a passion for the antique hunt a year and a day and rejoice the rest of their lives if they discover at a curio dealer's or in their Summer wanderings one such high-backed chair or broad old sofa as those of which the Jewett house is full. Such a sideboard as that in the dining room, such spindle-legged escritoires,[3] such cabinets holding such a power of china—figures and cups and vases; carvings and corals and sea shells; minerals and strange things from the South seas—they could not discover if they bent all their energies to the toil.

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1 A variation of "gondola," gundalows were heavy, flat-bottomed boats used on New England rivers as gunboats during the American Revolution.

2 Le Petit Trianon is a small château on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles, France given to Marie Antoinette (1755-93) by her husband, King Louis XVI on 27 August 1775. She renovated both the château and the gardens and spent time there as an escape from the formality of the royal court.

3 Writing desks.

It seems as if one had no right to say so much about a house which is a home. And yet New England has few like this, and it is a part of her brave old history. There are few such broad, high halls arched and paneled; few such wide stairways with carved and polished railings, few such quaint gilded mirrors and antique portraits and last century bedsteads with white canopies. The old days and the new come together in spirit and blood so harmoniously that time seems to have run on without thought of a break and the Now is just the natural, rightful development of the Then.

I wanted to ask Miss Jewett some questions that might have been rude. In "Deephaven" she tells of a particularly interesting carpet in whose great figures Kate Lancaster used to play keep house with her dolls, and if one of them chanced to fall outside the boundary stripe it was immediately put to bed with a cold. I wondered if that were not the carpet in her dining room. She told me without my asking and, I hope, because she saw that my interest in the noble house was unfeigned, that the place had belonged to her people for seventy years, and that, before the time of her surgeon father, her sea-faring grandfather had brought home many of the curios. Before the grandfather's time the mansion was an old one and there are traces of French elegance as well as colonial solidity in its finishings.

Flowers and Horses

Behind the house is a big old-fashioned garden, and every room is sweet with posies. There is a stable, too, for Miss Jewett loves her horses and drives almost daily over the green hills, now bright with goldenrod, of the beautiful coast of Maine. She is an oarswoman as well, and her boat knows every reach of the river and all its quiet sunlit coves. Hers is a life close to nature and yet not apart from people, for she spends her Winters in Boston. It would be hard to plan one's years on lines more nearly ideal, hard to see how one could get a better chance of growth and development and strong, true work—such work as Miss Jewett is doing. There is rest, there is peace, there is time to think, and the sincerity and serenity of it all comes out in her novels.

I had not meant to make this an interview, for one does not print questions and answers when a woman takes you into her home. But perhaps Miss Jewett will let me say that she attends to her correspondence in the morning and writes usually in the afternoon. I think she said she was in a sense a fitful worker. That is, she may write 8000 or 10,000 words in a day, but she never keeps up that pace for very long. Many of her magazine sketches have been written at a sitting; some have been retouched, perhaps almost rewritten afterward; others have

gone to the printer with scarcely the change of a word. When she has a long story on hand she writes from 2000 to 4000 words a day, five days in the week, possibly. A novel finished, there comes the growing and the gaining time. For months, maybe, she reads and rides and rows till she has something more so well worth saying that pen and paper must come into play again.

Her Study Favorites

Miss Jewett's "den" is the most delightful I have ever seen. It is in the upper hall, with a wide window looking down upon the tree-shaded village street. A desk strewn with papers is on one side and on the other a case of books and a table. Pictures, flowers and books are everywhere. The room set apart for the library is one of the four great square ones downstairs. But the books overflow it. They lie upon the sofas and have shelves in the bedrooms. It is the house of a woman who studies. Scott particularly.[1] For she doesn't believe with Howells that the art of novel-writing has grown a so much finer thing since the great romancer's day that we have nothing to learn from him. "The busier I get," she said, "the more time I make to read the 'Waverley' novels."

"And of the more modem writers?"

"What would you say if I asked you that question?"

"That it depended on the mood."

"What other answer can you expect from me? One can nearly always read Stevenson[2] and the Scotch children; but one book is for one day's thinking and another for another's."

Miss Jewett spoke with the warmest appreciation of the books of Miss Mary E. Wilkins,[3] whose work is like and yet so unlike her own. Both have written lovingly and truthfully of the simple, country life of New England; but where one is photographic, the sentences of the other are shot with the colors of the imagination. "I read Miss Wilkins'

1 Scottish historical novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) published his first novel, *Waverley*, in 1814. The term "Waverly novels" refers to the series of novels—including *The Tale of Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and *Ivanhoe* (1819)—published anonymously until 1827 as "By the author of *Waverly*." Scott's novels were the most widely read throughout Europe for over a century.

2 Scottish novelist and travel writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) is the author of *Treasure Island* (1883), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and *Kidnapped* (1886).

3 Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930) is, along with Jewett, one of the most important New England writers of her generation. She is the author of *A Humble Romance and Other Stories* (1887), *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (1891), *Pembroke* (1894), and *The Portion of Labor* (1901).

first stories," she said, "and wondered that the public did not recognize sooner that a new genius had arisen."

"Of your own books, which do you like best?"

"They are a pretty large family now," and she smiled. "There are always personal reasons, you know, and associations that may influence one's judgment. I don't think I have a favorite. In some ways I like "A Country Doctor"[1] best, and yet I believe "A Marsh Island"[2] is a better story."

I am not quoting Miss Jewett verbatim, and that I try to quote her at all she must forgive me.

An Early Beginning

Not many writers have felt the scribbling instinct so young. "Lucy Garrou's Lovers"[3] was written and printed when its author was somewhere about 14. Before she was 20 Miss Jewett had seen her signature in the "Atlantic Monthly" and other magazines, but as she counts things now her serious work did not begin until some time after then.

What the future may bring she is chary about saying, but with the best years of her life ahead the best work is still to come from a woman young in years and younger in spirit and vitality.

It is worth a day's journey down into Maine to sit in one of those big, cool old rooms, with the rain dashing against the windows and tossing the lilac branches about wildly, and to hear such earnest, common sense as one gets from few women. Of course, we talked about the new woman. Miss Jewett isn't at all worried about her. She believes in the natural evolution of things. The world progresses just about as fast as the mass can be leavened wholesomely. There are not so many isolated women in advance of their day now as a generation ago, but the average woman has moved a long distance forward. That there is room for the women in the professions nobody any longer questions. What more is to come is a matter for growth and time.

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1 *A Country Doctor* (1884) is Jewett's novel about a young woman who rejects marriage in order to pursue a career in medicine.

2 The novel *A Marsh Island* was first serialized in the January through June issues of the 1885 *Atlantic Monthly* and was published separately that same year.

3 See Carl J. Weber's "Sarah Orne Jewett's First Story," *New England Quarterly* 19.1 (1946): 85-90, for an account of the history of this misnamed story. Weber convincingly establishes that the story is actually titled "Jenny Garrow's Lovers" by A.C. Eliot (a pen name Jewett used in her early years) and was published in a Boston weekly, *The Flag of Our Union* 23.3 (18 January 1868). Jewett would have been nineteen years old at its publication.

We talked about Whittier.[1] Whittier knew Berwick and used to come there in his younger days to Friends' Quarterly Meeting. So when he had grown old and shrank from strangers Miss Jewett used to tell him about people and places, unforgotten but from which his life had drifted him away.

The lilac bushes splashed water on me as I went down the flagged walk to the street, but the sun was red in the west as the train pulled out of the station. And so I shall remember the river falls, the sound of the factory bells, the beating of the storm, the dark green of the country hills, and, above all, the strong, reviving personality of the slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed woman who looked out on a wet world so cheerily as she stood again in the doorway in her simple Summer dress to bid me good-by.

South Berwick is a beautiful old country town, with the tidewater of the Atlantic pulsing twice a day up to its decaying wharves, but it has nothing else of so much importance to the world outside as its woman writer, Sarah Orne Jewett.

[Source: *Philadelphia Press*, Sunday, 18 August 1895, 32]

1 John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92) was a New England poet and ardent abolitionist whose works include *Legends of New England* (1831) and *In War Time* (1864).

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