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Содержание

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MAN UNDER SEALED ORDERS

A vessel of war leaves its port, but no one on board knows for what object, nor whither it is bound. It is a secret Government expedition. As it sets out, a number of documents, carefully sealed, are put in charge of the commander, in which all his instructions are contained. When far away from his sovereign, these are to be the authority which he must obey; as he sails on in the dark, these are to be the lights on the deep by which he must steer. They provide for every stage of the way. They direct what ports to approach and what ports to avoid, what to do in different seas, what variation to make in certain contingencies, and what acts to perform at certain opportunities. Each paper of the series forbids the opening of the next until its own directions have been fulfilled; so that no one can see beyond the immediate point for which he is making.

The wide ocean is before that ship, and a wider mystery. But in the passage of time, as the strange cruise proceeds, its course begins to tell upon the chart. The zigzag line, like obscure chirography, has an intelligible look, and seems to spell out intimations. As order after order is opened, those sibyl leaves of the cabin commence to prophesy, glimpses multiply, surmises come quick, and shortly the whole ship's company more than suspect, from the accumulating *data* behind them, what must be their destination, and the mission they have been sent to accomplish.

People are beginning to imagine that the career of the human race is something like this. There is a fast-growing conviction that man has been sent out, from the first, to fulfil some inexplicable purpose, and that he holds a Divine commission to perform a wonderful work on the earth. It would seem as if his marvellous brain were the bundle of mystic scrolls on which it is written, and within which its terms are hid,—and as if his imperishable soul were the great seal, bearing the Divine image and superscription, which attests its Almighty original.

This commission is yet obscure. It has so far only gradually opened to him, for he is sailing under sealed orders. He is still led on from point to point. But the farther he goes, and the more his past gathers behind him, the better is he able to imagine what must be before him. His chart is every day getting more full of amazing indications. He is beginning to feel about him the increasing press of some Providential design that has been permeating and moulding age after age, and to discover that be has been all along unconsciously prosecuting a secret mission. And so it comes at last that everything new takes that look; every evolution of mind, every addition to knowledge, every discovery of truth, every novel achievement appearing like the breaking of seals and opening of rolls, in the performance of an inexhaustible and mysterious trust that has been committed to his hands.

It is the purpose of this paper to collect together some of these facts and incidents of progress, in order to show that this is not a mere dream, but a stupendous reality. History shall be the inspiration of our prophecy.

There is a past to be recounted, a present to be described, and a future to be foretold. An immense review for a magazine article, and it will require some ingenuity to be brief and graphic at the same time. In the attempt to get as much as possible into the smallest space, many things will have to be omitted, and some most profound particulars merely glanced at; but enough will be furnished, perhaps, to make the point we have in view.

We may compare human progress to a tall tree which has reared itself, slowly and imperceptibly, through century after century, hardly more than a bare trunk, with here and there only the slight outshoot of some temporary exploit of genius, but which in this age gives the signs of that immense foliage and fruitage which shall in time embower the whole earth. We see but its spring-time of leaf,—for it is only within fifty years that this rich outburst of wonders began. We live in an era when progress is so new as to be a matter of amazement. A hundred years hence, perhaps it will have become so much a matter of course to develop, to expand, and to discover, that it will excite no comment. But it is yet novel, and we are yet fresh. Therefore we may gaze back at what has been, and gaze forward at what is promised to be, with more likelihood of being impressed than if we were a few centuries older.

If we look down at the roots out of which this tree has risen, and then up at its spreading branches,—omitting its intermediate trunk of ages, through which its processes have been secretly working,—perhaps we may realize in a briefer space the wonder of it all.

In the beginning of history, according to received authority, there was but a little tract of the earth occupied, and that by one family, speaking but one tongue, and worshipping but one God,—all the rest of the world being an uninhabited wild. At *this* stage of history the whole globe is explored, covered with races of every color, a host of nations and languages, with every diversity of custom, development of character, and form of religion. The physical bound from that to this is equalled only by the leap which the world of mind has made.

Once upon a time a man hollowed a tree, and, launching it upon the water, found that it would bear him up. After this a few little floats, creeping cautiously near the land, were all on which men were wont to venture. *Now* there are sails fluttering on every sea, prodigious steamers throbbing like leviathans against wind and wave; harbors are built, and rocks and shoals removed; lighthouses gleam nightly from ten thousand stations on the shore; the great deep itself is sounded by plummet and diving-bell; the submarine world is disclosed; and man is gathering into his hands the laws of the very winds that toss its surface.

Once the earth had a single rude, mud-built hamlet, in which human dwellings were first clustered together. *Now* it is studded with splendid cities, strewn thick with towns and villages, diversified by infinite varieties of architecture: sumptuous buildings, unlike in every clime, each as if sprung from its own soil and made out of its air.

Once there were only the elementary discoveries of the lever, the wedge, the bended bow, the wheel; Tubal worked in iron and copper, and Naamah twisted threads. Since then what a jump the mechanical arts have made! These primitive elements are now so intricately combined that we can hardly recognize them; new forces have been added, new principles evolved; ponderous engines, like moving mountains of iron, shake the very earth; many-windowed factories, filled with complex machinery driven by water or its vapor, clatter night and day, weaving the plain garments of the poor man and the rich robes of the prince, the curtains of the cottage and the upholstery of the palace.

Once there were but the spear and bow and shield, and hand-to-hand conflicts of brute strength. See now the whole enginery of war, the art of fortification, the terrific perfection of artillery, the mathematical transfer of all from the body to the mind, till the battlefield is but a chess-board, and the battle is really waged in the brains of the generals. How astonishing was that last European field of Solferino, ten miles in sweep,—with the balloon floating above it for its spy and scout,—with the thread-like wire trailing in the grass, and the lightning coursing back and forth, Napoleon's ubiquitous aide-de-camp,—with railway-trains, bringing reinforcements into the midst of the *melée*, and their steam-whistle shrieking amid the thunders of battle! And what a picture of even greater magnificence, in some respects, is before us to-day! A field not of ten, but ten thousand miles in sweep! McClellan, standing on the eminence of present scientific achievement, is able to overlook half the breadth of a continent, and the widely scattered detachments of a host of six hundred thousand men. The rail connects city with city; the wire hangs between camp and camp, and reaches from army to army.

Steam is hurling his legions from one point to another; electricity brings him intelligence, and carries his orders; the aëronaut in the sky is his field-glass searching the horizon. It is practically but one great battle that is raging beneath him, on the Potomac, in the mountains of Virginia, down the valley of the Mississippi, in the interiors of Kentucky and Tennessee, along the seaboard, and on the Gulf coast. The combatants are hidden from each other, but under the chieftain's eye the dozen armies are only the squadrons of a single host, their battles only the separate conflicts of a single field, the movements of the whole campaign only the evolutions of a prolonged engagement. The spectacle is a good illustration of the day. Under the magic of progress, war in its essence and vitality is really diminishing, even while increasing in *materiel* and grandeur. Neither time nor space will permit the old and tedious contests of history to be repeated. Military science has entered upon a new era, nearer than ever to the period when wars shall cease.

But to go on with a few more contrasts of the past with the present. Once men wrote only in symbols, like wedges and arrow-heads, on tiles and bricks, or in hieroglyphic pictures on obelisks and sepulchres,—afterward in crude, but current characters on stone, metal, wax, and papyrus. In a much later age appeared the farthest perfection of the invention: books engrossed on illuminated rolls of vellum, and wound on cylinders of boxwood, ivory, or gold,—and then put away like richest treasures of art. What a difference between perfection then and progress now! To-day the steam printing-press throws out its sheets in clouds, and fills the world with books. Vast libraries are the vaulted catacombs of modern times, in which the dead past is laid away, and the living present takes refuge. The glory of costly scrolls is dimmed by the illustrated and typographical wonders which make the bookstore a gorgeous dream. Knowledge, no longer rare, no longer lies in precarious accumulations within the cells of some poor monk's crumbling brain, but swells up like the ocean, universal and imperishable, pouring into the vacant recesses of all minds as the ocean pours into the hollows under its shore. To-day, newspapers multiplied by millions whiten the whole country every morning, like the hoar-frost; and books, numerous and brilliant as the stars, seem by a sort of astral influence to unseal the latent destinies of many an intellect, as by their illumination they stimulate thought and activity everywhere.

Once art seemed to have reached perfection in the pictures and sculptures of Greece and Rome. Yet now those master-pieces are not only equalled on canvas and in fresco, but reproduced by tens of thousands from graven sheets of copper, steel, and even blocks of wood,—or, if modelled in marble or bronze, are remodelled by hundreds, and set up in countless households as the household gods. It is the glory of to-day that the sun himself has come down to be the rival and teacher of artists, to work wonders and perform miracles in art. He is the celestial limner who shall preserve the authentic faces of every generation from now until the world is no more. He holds the mirror up to Nature, paralyzes the fleeting phantom, by chemical subtilty, on the burnished plate,—and there it is fixed forever. He prepares the optical illusion of the stereoscope, so that through tiny windows we may look as into fairy-land and find sections of this magnificent world modelled in miniature.

Once men imagined the earth to be a flat and limited tract. Now they realize that it is a ponderous ball floating in infinite ether. Once they thought the sky was a solid blue concave, studded with blazing points, an empire of fate, the gold-and-azure floor of the abode of gods and spirits. Now all that is dissolved away; the wandering planets become at will broad disks, like sisters of the moon; and countless millions of stars are now mirrored in the same retina with which the Magi saw the few thousands of the firmament that were visible from the plains of Chaldea.

Once men were aware of nothing in the earth beneath its hills and valleys and teeming soil. Now they walk consciously over the ruins of old worlds; they can decipher the strange characters and read the strange history graven on these gigantic tablets. The stony veil is rent, and they can look inimitable periods back, and see the curious animals which then moved up and down in the earth.

Once a glass bubble was a wonder for magnifying power. Now the lenses of the microscope bring an inverted universe to light. Men can look into a drop and discover an ocean crowded with millions of living creatures, monsters untypified in the visible world, playing about as in a great deep.

Once a Roman emperor prized a mysterious jewel because it brought the gladiators contending in the arena closer to the imperial canopy. Now observatories, with their revolving domes, crown the heights at every centre of civilization, and the mighty telescope, poised on exquisite mechanism, turns infinite space into a Coliseum, brings its invisible luminaries close to the astronomer's seat, and reveals the harmonies and splendors of those distant works of God.

Once the supposed elements were fire, and water, and earth, and air; once the amber was unique in its peculiar property, and the loadstone in its singular power. Now chemistry holds in solution the elements and secrets of creation; now electricity would seem to be the veil which hangs before the soul; now the magnetic needle, true to the loadstar, trembles on the sea, to make the mariner brave and the haven sure.

We have by no means exhausted the wonders that have accumulated upon man, in being accumulated by man. Their enumeration would be almost endless. But we leave all to mention one, with which there is nothing of old time to compare. It had no beginning then,—not even a germ. It is the peculiar leap and development of the age in which we live. Many things have combined to bring it to pass.

A spirit that had been hid, since the world began, in a coffer of metal and acid,—the genie of the lightning,—shut down, as by the seal of Solomon in the Arabian tale, was let loose but the other day, and commenced to do the bidding of man. Every one found that he could transport his thought to the ends of the earth in the twinkling of an eye. That spirit, with its electric wings, soon flew from city to city, and whithersoever the magnetic wire could be traced through the air, till the nations of all Europe stood as face to face, and the States of this great Union gazed one upon another. It made a continent like a household,—a cluster of peoples like members of a family,—each within hearing of the other's voice.

But one achievement remained to be performed before the whole world could become one. The ocean had hitherto hopelessly severed the globe into two hemispheres. Could man make it a single sphere? Could man, like Moses, smite the waves with his electric rod, and lead the legions of human thought across dry shod? He could,—and he did. We all remember it well. A range of submarine mountains was discovered, stretching from America to Europe. Their top formed a plateau, which, lying within two miles of the surface, offered an undulating shoal within human reach. A fleet of steamers, wary of storms, one day cautiously assembled midway over it. They caught the monster asleep, safely uncoiled the wire, and laid it from shore to shore. The treacherous, dreadful, omnipotent ocean was conquered and bound!

How the heart of the two worlds leaped when the news came! Then, more than at any time before, were most of us startled into a conviction of how *real* progress was,—how tremendous, and limitless, apparently, the power which God had put into man. Not that this, in itself, was greater than that which had preceded it, but it was the climax of all. The mechanical feat awoke more enthusiasm than even the scientific achievement which was its living soul,—not because it was more wonderful, but because it dispelled our last doubt. We all began to form a more definite idea of something great to come, that was yet lying stored away in the brain,—laid there from the beginning. Like the Magian on the heights of Moab, as he saw the tents of Israel and the tabernacle of God in the distance, we grew big with an involuntary vision, and were surprised into prophecies.

It was wonderful to see the Queen of England, on one side of that chasm of three thousand miles, wave a greeting to the President, and the President wave back a greeting to the Queen. But it was glorious to see that chord quiver with the music and the truth of the angelic song:—

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace,
Good-will toward men!"

Soon, however, came a check to the excitement. For above a score of days was that mysterious highway kept open from Valentia to Trinity Bay. But then the spell was lost, the waves flowed back, old ocean rolled on as before, and the crossing messages perished, like the hosts of Pharaoh in the sea.

That the miracle is ended is no indication that it cannot be repeated. For the very reason that the now dead, inarticulate wire, like an infant, lisped and stammered once, it is certain that another will soon be born, which will live to trumpet forth like the angel of civilization, its minister of flaming fire! No one should abate a jot from the high hope excited then. No imagination should suffer a cloud on the picture it then painted. Governments and capitalists have not been idle, and will not be discouraged. Already Europe and Africa are connected by an electric tunnel under the sea, five hundred miles in length; already Malta and Alexandria speak to each other through a tube lying under thirteen hundred miles of Mediterranean waters; already Britain bound to Holland and Hanover and Denmark by a triple cord of sympathy which all the tempests of the German Ocean cannot sever. And if we come nearer home, we shall find a project matured which will carry a fiery cordon around the entire coast of our country, linking fortress to fortress, and providing that last, desperate resource of unity, an outer girdle and jointed chain of force, to bind together and save a nation whose inner bonds of peace and love are broken.

Such energy and such success are enough to revive the expectation and to guaranty the coming of the day when we shall behold the electric light playing round the world unquenched by the seas, illuminating the land, revealing nation to nation, and mingling language with language, as if the "cloven tongues like as of fire" had appeared again, and "sat upon each of them."

It will be a strange period, and yet we shall see it. The word spoken here under the sun of mid-day, when it speaks at the antipodes, will be heard under the stars of midnight. Of the world of commerce it may be written, "There shall be no night there!" and of the ancient clock of the sun and stars, "There shall be time no longer!"

When the electric wire shall stretch from Pekin, by successive India stations, to London, and from India, by leaps from island to island, to Australia, and from New York westward to San Francisco, (as has been already accomplished,) and southward to Cape Horn, and across the Atlantic, or over the Strait to St. Petersburg,—when the endless circle is formed, and the magic net-work binds continent, and city, and village, and the isles of the sea, in one,—then who will know the world we live in, for the change that shall come upon it?

Time no more! Space no more! Mankind brought into one vast neighborhood!

Prophesy the greater union of all hearts in this interblending of all minds. Prophesy the boundless spread of civilization, when all barriers are swept away. Prophesy the catholicity of that religion in which as many phases of a common faith shall be endured as there are climes for the common human constitution and countries in a common world!

In those days men will carry a watch, not with a single face, as now, telling only the time of their own region, but a dial-plate subdivided into the disks of a dozen timepieces, announcing at a glance the hour of as many meridian stations on the globe. It will be the fair type of the man who wears it. When human skill shall find itself under this necessity, and mechanism shall reach this perfection, then the soul of that man will become also many-disked. He will be alive with the perpetual consciousness of many zeniths and horizons beside his own, of many nations far different from his own, of many customs, manners, and ideas, which he could not share, but is able to account for and respect.

We can peer as far as this into the future; for what we predict is only a reasonable deduction from certain given circumstances that are nearly around us now. We do not lay all the stress upon the telegraph, as if to attribute everything to it, but because that invention, and its recent crowning event, are the last great leap which the mind has made, and because in itself, and in its carrying out, it summoned all the previous discoveries and achievements of man to its aid. It is their last-born child, —the greater for its many parents. There is hardly a science, or an art, or an invention, which has not contributed to it, or which is not deriving sustenance or inspiration from it.

This latter fact makes it particularly suggestive. As it was begotten itself, and is in its turn begetting, so has it been with everything else in the world of progress. Every scientific or mechanical idea, every species of discovery, has been as naturally born of one or more antecedents of its own kind as men are born of men. There is a kith and kin among all these extraordinary creatures of the brain. They have their ancestors and descendants; not one is a Melchizedek, without father, without mother. Every one is a link in a regular order of generations. Some became extinct with their age, being superseded or no longer wanted; while others had the power of immense propagation, and produced an innumerable offspring, which have a family likeness to this day. The law of cause and effect has no better illustration than the history of inventions and discoveries. If there were among us an intellect sufficiently encyclopedic in knowledge and versatile in genius, it could take every one of these facts and trace its intricate lineage of principles and mechanisms, step by step, up to the original Adam of the first invention and the original Eve of the first necessity.

There is a period between us and these first parents of our present progress that is strangely obscure. It is a sort of antediluvian age, in which there were evidently stupendous mechanical powers of some kind, and an extensive acquaintance with some things. The ruins of Egypt alone would prove this. But a deluge of oblivion has washed over them, and left these colossal bones to tell what story they can. The only way to account for such an extinction is, that they were monstrous contrivances out of all proportion to their age, spasmodic successes in science, wonders born out of due time,—deriving no sustenance or support from a wide and various kindred, and therefore, like the giants which were of old, dying out with their day.

It is different with what has taken place since. Every work has come in its right time, just when best prepared for, and most required. There is not one but is sustained on every side, and fits into its place, as each new piece of colored stone in a mosaic is sustained by the progressive picture. Every one is conserved by its connections. Whatever has been done is sure,—and the past being secure, the future is guarantied. It is impossible that the present knowledge in the world should be extinguished. Nothing but a stroke of imbecility upon the race, nothing but the destruction of its libraries, nothing but the paralysis of the printing-press, and the annihilation of these means of intercommunication, —nothing but some such arbitrary intervention could accomplish it. The facts already in human possession, and the constitution of the mind, together insure what we have as imperishable, and what we are to obtain as illimitable.

We come now to another suggestive characteristic of the time,—another of its promises. So far we find Progress gathering fulness and strength,—making sure of itself. It has also been gathering impetus. It has been, all along, accumulating momentum, and now it sweeps on with breathless *rapidity*. The reason is, that, the farther it has gone, the more it has multiplied its agents. The present generation is not only carried forward, but is excited in every quarter. The activity and versatility of the intellect would appear to be inexhaustible. Instead of getting overstrained, or becoming lethargic, it never was so powerful, never had so many resources, never was so wide-awake. Men are busy turning over every stone in their way, in the hope of finding something new. Nothing would seem too small for human attention, nothing too great for human undertaking. The government Patent-Office, with its countless chambers, is not so large a museum of inventions as the capacious brain of to-day.

One man is engrossed over an apple-parer; another snatches the needle from the weary fingers of the seamstress, and offers her in return the sewing-machine. That man yonder has turned himself into an armory, and he brings out the deadliest instrument he can produce, something perhaps that can shoot you at sight, even though you be a speck in the horizon. His next-door neighbor is an iron workshop, and is forging an armor of proof for a vessel of war, from which the mightiest balls shall bound as lightly as the arrows from an old-time breastplate. There is another searching for that new motive power which shall keep pace with the telegraph, and hurl the bodies of men through space as fast as their thoughts are hurled; there is another seeking that electro-magnetic battery which shall speak instantly and distinctly to the ends of the earth. The mind of that astronomer is a telescope,

through whose increasing field new worlds float daily by; the mind of that geologist is a divining-rod, forever bending toward the waters of chaos, and pointing out new places where a shaft can be sunk into periods of almost infinite antiquity; the mind of that chemist is a subtile crucible, in which aboriginal secrets lie disclosed, and within whose depths the true philosopher's stone will be found; the mind of that mathematician is a maze of ethereal stair-ways, rising higher and higher toward the heaven of truth.

The ambition is everywhere,—in every breast; the power is everywhere,—in every brain. The giant and the pigmy are alike active in seeking out and finding out many inventions. And in this very universality of effort and result we discover another guaranty of the great future. The river of Progress multiplies its tributaries the farther it flows, and even now, unknown ages from its mouth, we already see that magnificent widening of its channel, in which, like the Amazon, it long anticipates the sea.

Man, the great achiever! the marvellous magician! Look at him! A head hardly six feet above the ground out of which he was taken. His "dome of thought and palace of the soul" scarce twenty-two inches in circumference; and within it, a little, gray, oval mass of "convoluted albumen and fibre, of some four pounds' weight," and there sits the intelligence which has worked all these wonders! An intelligence, say, six thousand years old next century. How many thousand years more will it think, and think, and wave the wand, and raise new spirits out of Nature, open her sealed-up mysteries, scale the stars, and uncover a universe at home? How long will it be before this inherent power, laid in it at the beginning by the Almighty, shall be exhausted, and reach its limit? Yes, how long? We cannot begin to know. We cannot imagine where the stopping-place could be. Perhaps there is none.

To take up the nautical figure which has furnished our title,—we are in the midst of an infinite sea, sailing on to a destination we know not of, but of which the vague and splendid fancies we have formed hang before our prow like illusions in the sky. We are meeting on every hand great opportunities which must not be lost, new achievements which must be wrought, and strange adventures which must be undertaken: every day wondering more to what our commission shall bring us at last, full of magnificent hopes and a growing faith,—the inscrutable bundle of orders not nearly exhausted: whole continents of knowledge yet to be discovered and explored; the gates of yet distant sciences to be sought and unlocked; the fortresses of yet undreamed necessities to be taken; Arcadias of beauty to be visited and their treasures garnered by the imagination; an intricate course to be followed amid all future nations and governments, and their winding histories, as if threading the devious channels of endless archipelagoes; the spoils of all ages to be gathered, and treaties of commerce with all generations to be made, before the mysterious voyage is done.

And now, before we leave this fascinating theme, or suffer another dream, let us stop where we are, in order to see where we are. Let us take our bearings. What says our chart? What do we find in the horizon of the present, which may give us the wherewithal to hope, to doubt, or to fear?

The era in which we live presents some remarkable characteristics, which have been brought into it by this immense material success. It is preeminently an age of *reality:* an age in which a host of unrealities—queer and strange old notions—have been destroyed forever. Never were the vaulted spaces in this grand old temple of a world swept so clean of cobwebs before. The mind has not gone forth working outside wonders, without effecting equal inside changes. In achieving abroad, it has been ennobling at home. At no time was it so free from superstition as now, and from the absurdities which have for centuries beset and filled it. What numberless delusions, what ghosts, what mysteries, what fables, what curious ideas, have disappeared before the besom of the day! The old author long ago foretasted this, who wrote,—"The divine arts of printing and gunpowder have frightened away Robin Goodfellow, and all the fairies." It is told of Kepler, that he believed the planets were borne through the skies in the arms of angels; but science shortly took a wider sweep, killed off the angels, and showed that the wandering luminaries had been accustomed from infancy to take care of themselves. And so has the firmament of all knowledge been cleared of its vapors and fictions, and been revealed in its solid and shining facts.

Here, then, lies the great distinction of the time: the accumulation of *Truth*, and the growing appetite for the true and the real. The year whirls round like the toothed cylinder in a threshing-machine, blowing out the chaff in clouds, but quietly dropping the rich kernels within our reach. And it will always be so. Men will sow their notions and reap harvests, but the inexorable age will winnow out the truth, and scatter to the winds whatsoever is error.

Now we see how that impalpable something has been produced which we call the "Spirit of the Age,"—that peculiar atmosphere in which we live, which fills the lungs of the human spirit, and gives vitality and character to all that men at present think and say and feel and do. It is this identical spirit of courageous inquiry, honest reality, and intense activity, wrought up into a kind of universal inspiration, moving with the same disposition, the same taste, the same thought, persons whole regions apart and unknown to each other. We are frequently surprised by coincidences which prove this novel, yet common *afflatus*. Two astronomers, with the ocean between them, calculate at the same moment, in the same direction, and simultaneously light upon the same new orb. Two inventors, falling in with the same necessity, think of the same contrivance, and meet for the first time in a newspaper war, or a duel of pamphlets, for the credit of its authorship. A dozen widely scattered philosophers as quickly hit upon the self-same idea as if they were in council together. A more rational development of some old doctrine in divinity springs up in a hundred places at once, as if a theological epidemic were abroad, or a synod of all the churches were in session. It has also another peculiarity. The thought which may occur at first to but one mind seems to have an affinity to all minds; and if it be a free and generous thought, it is instantly caught, intuitively comprehended, and received with acclamations all over the world. Such a spirit as this is rapidly bringing all sections and classes of mankind into sympathy with one another, and producing a supreme caste in human nature, which, as it increases in numbers, will mould the character and control the destinies of the race.

So far we speak of the upper air of the day. But there is no denying the prevalence of a lower and baser spirit. We are uncomfortably aware that there is another extreme to the freaks of the imagination. There are superstitions of the reason and of realism,—the grotesque fancies, mysticisms, and vagaries which prevail, and the diseased gusto for something ultra and outlandish which affects many raw and undisciplined minds. Yet even these are, in their way, indications of the pervading disposition,—the unhealthy exhalations to be expected from hitherto stagnant regions, stirred up by the active and regenerating thought of the time. There is promise even in them, and they serve to distinguish the more that purer and higher spirit of honesty and reality, which clarifies the intellect, and invigorates the faculties that apprehend and grasp the noble and the true.

We glory in this triumph of the reason over the imagination, and in this predominance of the real over the ideal. We prefer that common sense should lead the van, and that mere fancy, like the tinselled conjurer behind his hollow table and hollow apparatus, should be taken for what it is, and that its tricks and surprises should cease to bamboozle, however much they may amuse mankind. Nothing, in the course of Providence, conveys so much encouragement as this recent and growing development of reality in thought and pursuit. In its presence the future of the world looks substantial and sure. We dream of an immense change in the tone of the human spirit, and in the character of the civilization which shall in time embower the earth.

But, as it has always been, the greater the good, the nearer the evil; Satan is next-door neighbor to the saint; Eden had a lurking-hole for the serpent. Just here the voyaging is most dangerous; just here we drop the plummet and strike upon a shoal; we lift up our eyes, and discover a lee-shore.

The mind that is not profound enough to perceive and believe even what it cannot comprehend, —that is the shoal. Unless the reason will permit the sounding-lead to fall illimitably down into a submarine world of mystery, too deep for the diver, and yet a true and living world,—unless there is admitted to be a fathomless gulf, called *faith*, underlying the surface-sea of demonstration, the race will surely ground in time, and go to pieces. There is the peril of this all-prevailing love of the real. It may become such an infatuation that nothing will appear actual which is not visible or demonstrable,

which the hand cannot handle or the intellect weigh and measure. Even to this extreme may the reason run. Its vulnerable point is pride. It is easily encouraged by success, easily incited to conceit, readily inclined to overestimate its power. It has a Chinese weakness for throwing up a wall on its involuntary boundary-line, and for despising and defying all that is beyond its jurisdiction. The reason may be the greatest or the meanest faculty in the soul. It may be the most wise or the most foolish of active things. It may be so profound as to acknowledge a whole infinitude of truth which it cannot comprehend, or it may be so superficial as to suspect everything it is asked to believe, and refuse to trust a fact out of its sight. There is the danger of the day. There is the lee-shore upon which the tendencies of the age are blowing our bark: a gross and destructive materialism, which is the horrid and treacherous development of a shallow realism.

In the midst of this splendid era there is a fast-increasing class who are disposed to make the earth the absolute All,—to deny any outlet from it,—to deny any capacity in man for another sphere,—to deny any attribute in God which interests Him in man,—to shut out, therefore, all faith, all that is mysterious, all that is spiritual, all that is immortal, all that is Divine.

"There live, alas! of heaven-directed mien,
Of cultured soul, and sapient eye serene,
Who hail thee Man!—the pilgrim of a day,
Spouse of the worm, and brother of the clay,
Frail as the leaf in autumn's yellow bower,
Dust in the wind, or dew upon the flower,
A friendless slave, a child without a sire.
* * * * *
Are these the pompous tidings ye proclaim,
Lights of the world, and demigods of Fame?
Is this your triumph, this your proud applause,
Children of Truth, and champions of her cause?
For this hath Science searched on weary wing,
By shore and sea, each mute and living thing?
Launched with Iberia's pilot from the steep,
To worlds unknown, and isles beyond the deep?
Or round the cope her living chariot driven,
And wheeled in triumph through the signs of heaven?
O star-eyed Science, hast thou wandered there,
To waft us home the message of despair?"

Is shipwreck, after all, to be the end of the mysterious voyage? Yes, unless there is something else beside materialism in the world. Unless there is another spirit blowing *off* that dreadful shore, unless the chart opens a farther sea, unless the needle points to the same distant star, unless there are other orders, yet sealed and secret, there is no further destiny for the race, no further development for the soul. The intellect, however grand, is not the whole of man. Material progress, however magnificent, is not the guaranty, not even the cardinal element, of civilization. And civilization, in the highest possible meaning of that most expressive word, is that great and final and all-embosoming harbor toward which all these achievements and changes dimly, but directly, point. Upon that we have fixed our eyes, but we cannot imagine how it can be attained by intellectual and material force alone.

In order to indicate this more vividly, let us suppose that there is no other condition necessary to the glory of human nature and the world,—let us suppose that no other provision has been made, and that the age is to go on developing only in this one direction,—what a dreary grandeur would soon surround us! As icebergs floating in an Arctic sea are splendid, so would be these ponderous

and glistering works. As the gilded and crimsoned cliffs of snow beautify the Polar day, so would these achievements beautify the present day. But expect no life, no joy, no soul, amid such ice-bound circumstances as these. The tropical heart must congeal and die; its luxuriant fruits can never spring up. The earth must lie sepulchred under its own magnificence; and the divinest feelings of the spirit, floating upward in the instinct of a higher life, but benumbed by the frigid air, and rebuked by the leaden sky, must fall back like clouds of frozen vapor upon the soul: and "so shall its thoughts perish."

It would be a gloomy picture to paint, if one could for a moment imagine that intellectual power and material success were all that enter into the development of the race. For if there is no other capacity, and no other field in which at least an equal commission to achieve is given, and for which equal arrangements have been made by the Providence that orders all, then the soul must soon be smothered, society dismembered, and human nature ruined.

But this very fact, which we purposely put in these strong colors, proves that there must be another and greater element, another and higher faculty, another and wider department, likewise under express and secret conditions of success. It shall come to pass, as the development goes on, that this other will become the foremost and all-important, —the relation between them will be reversed, —this must increase, that decrease,—the Material, although the first in time, the first in the world's interest, and the first in the world's effort, will be found to be only an ordained forerunner, preparing the way for Something Else, the latchet of whose shoes it is not worthy to unloose.

There is that in man—also wrapt up and sealed within his inscrutable brain—which provides for his inner as well as outer life; which insures his highest development; which shall protect, cherish, warm, and fertilize his nature now, and perpetuate and exalt his soul forever. It is a commission which begins, but does not end, in time. It is a commission which makes him the agent and builder of an immense moral work on the earth. Under its instructions he shall add improvement to improvement in that social fabric which is already his shelter and habitation. He has found it of brick,—he shall leave it of marble. He shall seek out every contrivance, and perfect every plan, and exhaust every scheme, which will bring a greater prosperity and a nobler happiness to mankind. He shall quarry out each human spirit, and carve it into the beauty and symmetry of a living stone that shall be worthy to take its place in the rising structure. This is the work which is given him to do. He must develop those conditions of virtue, and peace, and faith, and truth, and love, by which the race shall be lifted nearer its Creator, and the individual ascend into a more conscious neighborhood and stronger affinity to the world which shall receive him at last. All this must that other department be, and this other capacity achieve or there is a fatal disproportion in the progress of man.

The beauty of this as a dream perhaps all men will admit; but they question its possibility. "It is the old Utopia," they say, "the impracticable enterprise that has always baffled the world." Some will doubt whether the Spiritual has an existence at all. Others will doubt, if it does exist, whether man can accomplish anything in it. It is invisible, impalpable, unknown. It cannot be substantial, it cannot be real,—at least to man as at present constituted. Its elements and conditions cannot be controlled by his spirit. That spirit cannot control itself,—how much less go forth and work solid wonders in that phantom realm! There can be no success in this that will be coequal with the other; nor a coequal grandeur. There is no such thing as keeping pace with it. The heart cannot grow better, society cannot be built higher, mankind cannot become happier, God will not draw nearer, the hidden truth of all that universe will never be more ascertained than it is,—can never be accumulated and stored away among other human acquisitions. It is utterly, gloomily impracticable. In this respect we shall forever remain as we are, and where we are. So they think.

And now we venture to contradict it all, and to assert that there is, there must be, just such a corresponding field, and just such a corresponding progress, or else (we say it reverently) God's ways are not equal. So great is our faith. Like Columbus, therefore, we dream of the golden Indies, and of that "unknown residue" which must yet be found, and be taken possession of by mankind.

We look far out to where the horizon dips its vapory veil into the sea, and beyond which lies that other hemisphere, and ask,—Is there no world there to be a counterpoise to the world that is here? Has the Creator made no provision for the equilibrium of the soul? Is all that infinite area a shoreless waste, over which the fleets of speculation may sail forever, and discover nothing? Or is there not, rather, a broad and solid continent of spiritual truth, eternally rooted in that ocean,—prepared, from the beginning, for the occupation of man, when the fulness of time shall have come,—ordained to take its place in the historic evolution of the race, and to give the last and definite shape to its wondrous destinies?

Is there, or is there not, another region of truth, of enterprise, of progress,—to finish, to balance, to consummate the world?

Such is the Problem.

* * * * *

MY GARDEN

I can speak of it calmly now; but there have been moments when the lightest mention of those words would sway my soul to its profoundest depths.

I am a woman. I nip this fact in the bud of my narrative, because I like to do as I would be done by, when I can just as well as not. It rasps a person of my temperament exceedingly to be deceived. When any one tells a story, we wish to know at the outset whether the story-teller is a man or a woman. The two sexes awaken two entirely distinct sets of feelings, and you would no more use the one for the other than you would put on your tiny teacups at breakfast, or lay the carving-knife by the butter-plate. Consequently it is very exasperating to sit, open-eyed and expectant, watching the removal of the successive swathings which hide from you the dusky glories of an old-time princess, and, when the unrolling is over, to find it is nothing, after all, but a great lubberly boy. Equally trying is it to feel your interest clustering round a narrator's manhood, all your individuality merging in his, till, of a sudden, by the merest chance, you catch the swell of crinoline, and there you are. Away with such clumsiness! Let us have everybody christened before we begin.

I do, therefore, with Spartan firmness depose and say that I am a woman. I am aware that I place myself at signal disadvantage by the avowal. I fly in the face of hereditary prejudice. I am thrust at once beyond the pale of masculine sympathy. Men will neither credit my success nor lament my failure, because they will consider me poaching on their manor. If I chronicle a big beet, they will bring forward one twice as large. If I mourn a deceased squash, they will mutter, "Woman's farming!" Shunning Scylla, I shall perforce fall into Charybdis. (*Vide* Classical Dictionary. I have lent mine, but I know one was a rock and the other a whirlpool, though I cannot state, with any definiteness, which was which.) I may be as humble and deprecating as I choose, but it will not avail me. A very agony of self-abasement will be no armor against the poisoned shafts which assumed superiority will hurl against me. Yet I press the arrow to my bleeding heart, and calmly reiterate, I am a woman.

The full magnanimity of which reiteration can be perceived only when I inform you that I could easily deceive you, if I chose. There is about my serious style a vigor of thought, a comprehensiveness of view, a closeness of logic, and a terseness of diction commonly supposed to pertain only to the stronger sex. Not wanting in a certain fanciful sprightliness which is the peculiar grace of woman, it possesses also, in large measure, that concentrativeness which is deemed the peculiar strength of man. Where an ordinary woman will leave the beaten track, wandering in a thousand little by ways of her own,—flowery and beautiful, it is true, and leading her airy feet to "sunny spots of greenery" and the gleam of golden apples, but keeping her not less surely from the goal,—I march straight on, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, beguiled into no side-issues, discussing no collateral question, but with keen eye and strong hand aiming right at the heart of my theme. Judge thus of the stern severity of my virtue. There is no heroism in denying ourselves the pleasures which we cannot compass. It is not self-sacrifice, but self-cherishing, that turns the dyspeptic alderman away from turtle-soup and the *pâté de foie gras* to mush and milk. The hungry newsboy, regaling his nostrils with the scents that come up from a subterranean kitchen, does not always know whether or not he is honest, till the cook turns away for a moment, and a steaming joint is within reach of his yearning fingers. It is no credit to a weak-minded woman not to be strong-minded and write poetry. She couldn't, if she tried; but to feed on locusts and wild honey that the soul may be in better condition to fight the truth's battles,—to go with empty stomach for a clear conscience's sake,—to sacrifice intellectual tastes to womanly duties, when the two conflict,—

> "That's the true pathos and sublime,
> Of human life."

You will, therefore, no longer withhold your appreciative admiration, when, in full possession of what theologians call the power of contrary choice, I make the unmistakable assertion that I am a woman.

Of the circumstances that led me to inchoate a garden it is not necessary now to speak. Enough that the first and most important step had been taken, the land was bought,—a few acres, with a smart little house peeking up, a crazy little barn tumbling down, and a dozen or so fruit-trees that might do either as opportunity offered, and I set out on my triumphal march from the city of my birth to the estate of my adoption. Triumphal indeed! My pathway was strewed with roses. Feathery asparagus and the crispness of tender lettuce waved dewy greetings from every railroad-side; green peas crested the racing waves of Long Island Sound, and unnumbered carrots of gold sprang up in the wake of the ploughing steamer; till I was wellnigh drunk with the new wine of my own purple vintage. But I was not ungenerous. In the height of my innocent exultation, I remembered the dwellers in cities who do all their gardening at stalls, and in my heart I determined, when the season should be fully blown, to invite as many as my house could hold to share with me the delight of plucking strawberries from their stems and drinking in foaming health from the balmy-breathed cows. Moreover, in the exuberance of my joy, I determined to go still farther, and despatch to those doomed ones who cannot purchase even a furlough from burning pavements baskets of fragrance and sweetness. I pleased myself with pretty conceits. To one who toils early and late in an official Sahara, that the home atmosphere may always be redolent of perfume, I would send a bunch of long-stemmed white and crimson rose-buds, in the midst of which he should find a dainty note whispering, "Dear Fritz: Drink this pure glass of my overflowing June to the health of weans and wife, not forgetting your unforgetful friend." To a pale-browed, sad-eyed woman, who flits from velvet carpets and broidered flounces to the bedside of an invalid mother, whom her slender fingers and unslender and most godlike devotion can scarcely keep this side the pearly gates, I would heap a basket of summer-hued peaches smiling up from cool, green leaves into their straitened home, and, with eyes, perchance, tear-dimmed, she should read, "My good Maria: The peaches are to go to your lips, the bloom to your cheeks, and the gardener to your heart." Ah me! How much grace and gladness may bud and blossom in one little garden! Only three acres of land, but what a crop of sunny surprises, unexpected tendernesses, grateful joys, hopes, loves, and restful memories!—what wells of happiness, what sparkles of mirth, what sweeps of summer in the heart, what glimpses of the Upper Country!

Halicarnassus was there before me (in the garden, I mean, not in the spot last alluded to). It has been the one misfortune of my life that Halicarnassus got the start of me at the outset. With a fair field and no favor I should have been quite adequate to him. As it was, he was born and began, and there was no resource left to me but to be born and follow, which I did as fast as possible; but that one false move could never be redeemed. I know there are shallow thinkers who love to prate of the supremacy of mind over matter,—who assert that circumstances are plastic as clay in the hands of the man who knows how to mould them. They clench their fists, and inflate their lungs, and quote Napoleon's proud boast,—"Circumstances! I *make* circumstances!" Vain babblers! Whither did this Napoleonic Idea lead? To a barren rock in a waste of waters. Do we need St. Helena and Sir Hudson Lowe to refute it? Control circumstances! I should like to know if the most important circumstance that can happen to a man isn't to be born? and if that is under his control, or in any way affected by his whims and wishes? Would not Louis XVI. have been the son of a goldsmith, if he could have had his way? Would Burns have been born a slaving, starving peasant, if he had been consulted beforehand? Would not the children of vice be the children of virtue, if they could have had their choice? and would not the whole tenor of their lives have been changed thereby? Would a good many of us have been born at all, if we could have helped it? Control circumstances, forsooth! when a mother's sudden terror brings an idiot child into the world,—when the restive eye of his great-grandfather, whom he never saw, looks at you from your two-year-old, and the spirit of that roving ancestor makes the boy also a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth! No, no. We may coax circumstances a little, and shove

them about, and make the best of them, but there they are. We may try to get out of their way; but they will trip us up, not once, but many times. We may affect to tread them under foot in the daylight, but in the night-time they will turn again and rend us. All we can do is first to accept them as facts, and then reason from them as premises. We cannot control them, but we can control our own use of them. We can make them a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death.

Application.—If mind could have been supreme over matter, Halicarnassus should, in the first place, have taken the world at second-hand from me, and, in the second place, he should not have stood smiling on the front-door steps when the coach set me down there. As it was, I made the best of the one case by following in his footsteps,—not meekly, not acquiescently, but protesting, yet following,—and of the other, by smiling responsive and asking pleasantly,—

"Are the things planted yet?"

"No," said Halicarnassus.

This was better than I had dared to hope. When I saw him standing there so complacent and serene, I felt certain that a storm was brewing, or rather had brewed, and burst over my garden, and blighted its fair prospects. I was confident that he had gone and planted every square inch of the soil with some hideous absurdity which would spring up a hundred-fold in perpetual reminders of the one misfortune to which I have alluded.

So his ready answer gave me relief, and yet I could not divest myself of a vague fear, a sense of coming thunder. In spite of my endeavors, that calm, clear face would lift itself to my view as a mere "weather-breeder"; but I ate my supper, unpacked my trunks, took out my papers of precious seeds, and sitting in the flooding sunlight under the little western porch, I poured them into my lap, and bade Halicarnassus come to me. He came, I am sorry to say, with a pipe in his mouth.

"Do you wish to see my jewels?" I asked, looking as much like Cornelia as a little woman, somewhat inclined to dumpiness, can.

Halicarnassus nodded assent.

"There," said I, unrolling a paper, "that is *Lychnidea acuminala*. Sometimes it flowers in white masses, pure as a baby's soul. Sometimes it glows in purple, pink, and crimson, intense, but unconsuming, like Horeb's burning bush. The old Greeks knew it well, and they baptized its prismatic loveliness with their sunny symbolism, and called it the Flame-Flower. These very seeds may have sprung centuries ago from the hearts of heroes who sleep at Marathon; and when their tender petals quiver in the sunlight of my garden, I shall see the gleam of Attic armor and the flash of royal souls. Like heroes, too, it is both beautiful and bold. It does not demand careful cultivation,—no hot-house, tenderness"—

"I should rather think not," interrupted Halicarnassus. "Pat Curran has his front-yard full of it."

I collapsed at once, and asked humbly,—

"Where did he get it?"

"Got it anywhere. It grows wild almost. It's nothing but phlox. My opinion is, that the old Greeks knew no more about it than that brindled cow."

Nothing further occurring to me to be said on the subject, I waived it and took up another parcel, on which I spelled out, with some difficulty, "*Delphinium exaltatum*. Its name indicates its nature."

"It's an exalted dolphin, then, I suppose," said Halicarnassus.

"Yes!" I said, dexterously catching up an *argumentum ad hominem*, "It *is* an exalted dolphin, —an apotheosized dolphin,—a dolphin made glorious. For, as the dolphin catches the sunbeams and sends them back with a thousand added splendors, so this flower opens its quivering bosom and gathers from the vast laboratory of the sky the purple of a monarch's robe and the ocean's deep, calm blue. In its gracious cup you shall see"—

"A fiddlestick!" jerked out Halicarnassus, profanely. "What are you raving about such a precious bundle of weeds for? There isn't a shoemaker's apprentice in the village that hasn't his seven-by-nine garden overrun with them. You might have done better than bring cartloads of phlox

and larkspur a thousand miles. Why didn't you import a few hollyhocks, or a sunflower or two, and perhaps a dainty slip of cabbage? A pumpkin-vine, now, would climb over the front-door deliciously, and a row of burdocks would make a highly entertaining border."

The reader will bear me witness that I had met my first rebuff with humility. It was probably this very humility that emboldened him to a second attack. I determined to change my tactics and give battle.

"Halicarnassus," said I, severely, "you are a hypocrite. You set up for a Democrat"—

"Not I," interrupted he; "I voted for Harrison in '40, and for Fremont in '56, and"—

"Nonsense!" interrupted I, in turn; "I mean a Democrat etymological, not a Democrat political. You stand by the Declaration of Independence, and believe in liberty, equality, and fraternity, and that all men are of one blood; and here you are, ridiculing these innocent flowers, because their brilliant beauty is not shut up in a conservatory to exhale its fragrance on a fastidious few, but blooms on all alike, gladdening the home of exile and lightening the burden of labor."

Halicarnassus saw that I had made a point against him, and preserved a discreet silence.

"But you are wrong," I went on, "even if you are right. You may laugh to scorn my floral treasures, because they seem to you common and unclean, but your laughter is premature. It is no ordinary seed that you see before you. It sprang from no profane soil. It came from the—the—some kind of an office at WASHINGTON, Sir! It was given me by one whose name stands high on the scroll of fame,—a statesman whose views are as broad as his judgment is sound,—an orator who holds all hearts in his hand,—a man who is always found on the side of the feeble truth against the strong falsehood,—whose sympathy for all that is good, whose hostility to all that is bad, and whose boldness in every righteous cause make him alike the terror and abhorrence of the oppressor, and the hope and joy and staff of the oppressed."

"What is his name?" said Halicarnassus, phlegmatically.

"And for your miserable pumpkin-vine," I went on, "behold this morning-glory, that shall open its barbaric splendor to the sun and mount heavenward on the sparkling chariots of the dew. I took this from the white hand of a young girl in whose heart poetry and purity have met, grace and virtue have kissed each other,—whose feet have danced over lilies and roses, who has known no sterner duty than to give caresses, and whose gentle, spontaneous, and ever active loveliness continually remind me that of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"Courted yet?" asked Halicarnassus, with a show of interest.

I transfixed him with a look, and continued,—

"This *Maurandia*, a climber, it may be common or it may be a king's ransom. I only know that it is rosy-hued, and that I shall look at life through its pleasant medium. Some fantastic trellis, brown and benevolent, shall knot supporting arms around it, and day by day it shall twine daintily up toward my southern window, and whisper softly of the sweet-voiced, tender-eyed woman from whose fairy bower it came in rosy wrappings. And this *Nemophila*, 'blue as my brother's eyes,'—the brave young brother whose heroism and manhood have outstripped his years, and who looks forth from the dank leafiness of far Australia lovingly and longingly over the blue waters, as if, floating above them, he might catch the flutter of white garments and the smile on a sister's lip"—

"What are you going to do with 'em?" put in Halicarnassus again.

I hesitated a moment, undecided whether to be amiable or bellicose under the provocation, but concluded that my ends would stand a better chance of being gained by adopting the former course, and so answered seriously, as if I had not been switched off the track, but was going on with perfect continuity,—

"To-morrow I shall take observations. Then, where the situation seems most favorable, I shall lay out a garden. I shall plant these seeds in it, except the vines and such things, which I wish to put near the house to hide as much as possible its garish white. Then, with every little tender shoot

that appears above the ground, there will blossom also a pleasant memory or a sunny hope or an admiring thrill."

"What do you expect will be the market-value of that crop?"

"Wealth which an empire could not purchase," I answered, with enthusiasm. "But I shall not confine my attention to flowers. I shall make the useful go with the beautiful. I shall plant vegetables,– lettuce, and asparagus, and—so forth. Our table shall be garnished with the products of our own soil, and our own works shall praise us."

There was a pause of several minutes, during which I fondled the seeds and Halicarnassus enveloped himself in clouds of smoke. Presently there was a cessation of puffs, a rift in the cloud showed that the oracle was opening his mouth, and directly thereafter he delivered himself of the encouraging remark,—

"If we don't have any vegetables till we raise 'em, we shall be carnivorous some time to come."

It was said with that provoking indifference more trying to a sensitive mind than downright insult. You know it is based on some hidden obstacle, palpable to your enemy, though hidden from you,—and that he is calm because he know that the nature of things will work against you, so that he need not interfere. If I had been less interested, I would have revenged myself on him by remaining silent; but I was very much interested, so I strangled my pride and said,—

"Why not?"

"Land is too old for such things. Soil isn't mellow enough."

I had always supposed that the greater part of the main-land of our continent was of equal antiquity, and dated back alike to the alluvial period; but I suppose our little three acres must have been injected through the intervening strata by some physical convulsion, from the drift, or the tertiary formation, perhaps even from the primitive granite.

"What are you going to do?" I ventured to inquire. "I don't suppose the land will grow any younger by keeping."

"Plant it with corn and potatoes for at least two years before there can be anything like a garden."

And Halicarnassus put up his pipe and betook himself to the house, and I was glad of it, the abominable bore! to sit there and listen to my glowing schemes, knowing all the while that they were soap-bubbles. "Corn and potatoes," indeed! I didn't believe a word of it. Halicarnassus always had an insane passion for corn and potatoes. Land represented to him so many bushels of the one or the other. Now corn and potatoes are very well in their way, but, like every other innocent indulgence, carried too far, become a vice; and I more than suspected he had planned the strategy simply to gratify his own weakness. Corn and potatoes, indeed!

But when Halicarnassus entered the lists against me, he found an opponent worthy of his steel. A few more such victories would be his ruin. A grand scheme fired and filled my mind during the silent watches of the night, and sent me forth in the morning, jubilant with high resolve. Alexander might weep that he had no more worlds to conquer; but I would create new. Archimedes might desiderate a place to stand on before he could bring his lever into play; I would move the world, self-poised. If Halicarnassus fancied that I was cut up, dispersed, and annihilated by one disaster, he should weep tears of blood to see me rise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of my dead hopes, to a newer and more glorious life. Here, having exhausted my classics, I took a long sweep down to modern times, and vowed in my heart never to give up the ship.

Halicarnassus saw that a fell purpose was working in my mind, but a certain high tragedy in my aspect warned him to silence; so he only dogged me around the corners of the house, eyed me askance from the wood-shed, and peeped through the crevices of the demented little barn. But his vigilance bore no fruit. I but walked moodily "with folded arms and fixed eyes," or struck out new paths at random, so long as there were any vestiges of his creation extant. His time and patience being at length exhausted, he went into the field to immolate himself with ever new devotion on the shrine of corn and potatoes. Then my scheme came to a head at once. In my walking, I had observed a box

about three feet long, two broad, and one foot deep, which Halicarnassus, with his usual disregard of the proprieties of life, had used to block up a gate-way that was waiting for a gate. It was just what I wanted. I straightway knocked out the few nails that kept it in place, and, like another Samson, bore it away on my shoulders. It was not an easy thing to manage, as any one may find by trying,—nor would I advise young ladies, as a general thing, to adopt that form of exercise,—but the end, not the means, was my object, and by skilful diplomacy I got it up the backstairs and through my window, out upon the roof of the porch directly below. I then took the ash-pail and the fire-shovel and went into the field, carefully keeping the lee side of Halicarnassus. "Good, rich loam" I had observed all the gardening books to recommend; but wherein the virtue or the richness of loam consisted I did not feel competent to decide, and I scorned to ask. There seemed to be two kinds: one black, damp, and dismal; the other fine, yellow, and good-natured. A little reflection decided me to take the latter. Gold constituted riches, and this was yellow like gold. Moreover, it seemed to have more life in it. Night and darkness belonged to the other, while the very heart of sunshine and summer seemed to be imprisoned in this golden dust. So I plied my shovel and filled my pail again and again, bearing it aloft with joyful labor, eager to be through before Halicarnassus should reappear; but he got on the trail just as I was whisking up-stairs for the last time, and shouted, astonished,—

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing," I answered, with that well-known accent which says, "Everything! and I mean to keep doing it."

I have observed, that, in managing parents, husbands, lovers, brothers, and indeed all classes of inferiors, nothing is so efficacious as to let them know at the outset that you are going to have your own way. They may fret a little at first, and interpose a few puny obstacles, but it will be only a temporary obstruction; whereas, if you parley and hesitate and suggest, they will but gather courage and strength for a formidable resistance. It is the first step that costs. Halicarnassus understood at once from my one small shot that I was in a mood to be let alone, and he let me alone accordingly.

I remembered he had said that the soil was not mellow enough, and I determined that my soil should be mellow, to which end I took it up by handfuls and squeezed it through my fingers, completely pulverizing it. It was not disagreeable work. Things in their right places are very seldom disagreeable. A spider on your dress is a horror, but a spider outdoors is rather interesting. Besides, the loam had a fine, soft feel that was absolutely pleasant; but a hideous black and yellow reptile with horns and hoofs, that winked up at me from it, was decidedly unpleasant and out of place, and I at once concluded that the soil was sufficiently mellow for my purposes, and smoothed it off directly. Then, with delighted fingers, in sweeping circles, and fantastic whirls, and exact triangles, I planted my seeds in generous profusion, determined, that, if my wilderness did not blossom, it should not be from niggardliness of seed. But even then my box was full before my basket was emptied, and I was very reluctantly compelled to bring down from the garret another box, which had been the property of my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather was, I regret to say, a barber. I would rather never have had any. If there is anything in the world besides worth that I reverence, it is ancestry. My whole life long have I been in search of a pedigree, and though I ran well at the beginning, I invariably stop short at the third remove by running my head into a barber's shop. If he had only been a farmer, now, I should not have minded. There is something dignified and antique in land, and no one need trouble himself to ascertain whether "farmer" stood for a close-fisted, narrow-souled clodhopper, or the smiling, benevolent master of broad acres. Farmer means both these, I could have chosen the meaning I liked, and it is not probable that any troublesome facts would have floated down the years to intercept any theory I might have launched. I would rather he had been a shoemaker; it would have been so easy to transform him, after his lamented decease, into a shoe-manufacturer, —and shoe-manufacturers, we all know, are highly respectable people, often become great men, and get sent to Congress. An apothecary might have figured as an M.D. A greengrocer might have been apotheosized into a merchant. A dancing-master would flourish on the family-records as a

professor of the Terpsichorean art. A taker of daguerreotype portraits would never be recognized in "my great-grandfather *the artist*." But a barber is unmitigated and immitigable. It cannot be shaded off nor toned down nor brushed up. Besides, was greatness ever allied to barbarity? Shakspeare's father was a wool-driver, Tillotson's a clothier, Barrow's a linen-draper, Defoe's a butcher, Milton's a scrivener, Richardson's a joiner, Burns's a farmer; but did any one ever hear of a barber's having remarkable children? I must say, with all deference to my great-grandfather, that I do wish he would have been considerate enough of his descendants' feelings to have been born in the old days when barbers and doctors were one, or else have chosen some other occupation than barbering. Barber he did, however; in this very box he kept his wigs, and, painful as it was to have continually before my eyes this perpetual reminder of plebeian great-grand-paternity, I consented to it rather than lose my seeds. Then I folded my hands in sweet, though calm satisfaction. I had proved myself equal to the emergency, and that always diffuses a glow of genial complacency through the soul. I had outwitted Halicarnassus. Exultation number two. He had designed to cheat me out of my garden by a story about land, and here was my garden ready to burst forth into blossom under my eyes. He said little, but I knew he felt deeply. I caught him one day looking out at my window with corroding envy in every lineament. "You might have got some dust out of the road; it would have been nearer." That was all he said. Even that little I did not fully understand.

I watched, and waited, and watered, in silent expectancy, for several days, but nothing came up, and I began to be anxious. Suddenly I thought of my vegetable-seeds, and determined to try those. Of course a hanging kitchen-garden was not to be thought of, and as Halicarnassus was fortunately absent for a few days, I prospected on the farm. A sunny little corner on a southern slope smiled up at me, and seemed to offer itself as a delightful situation for the diminutive garden which mine must be. The soil, too, seemed as fine and mellow as could be desired. I at once captured an Englishman from a neighboring plantation, hurried him into my corner, and bade him dig me and hoe me and plant me a garden as soon as possible. He looked blankly at me for a moment, and I looked blankly at him,—wondering what lion he saw in the way.

"Them is planted with potatoes now," he gasped, at length.

"No matter," I returned, with sudden relief to find that nothing but potatoes interfered. "I want it to be unplanted, and planted with vegetables,—lettuce and—asparagus—and such."

He stood hesitating.

"Will the master like it?"

"Yes," said Diplomacy, "he will be delighted."

"No matter whether he likes it or not," codiciled Conscience. "You do it."

"I—don't exactly like—to—take the responsibility," wavered this modern Faint-Heart.

"I don't want you to take the responsibility," I ejaculated, with volcanic vehemence. "I'll take the responsibility. You take the hoe."

These duty-people do infuriate me. They are so afraid to do anything that isn't laid out in a right-angled triangle. Every path must be graded and turfed before they dare set their scrupulous feet in it. I like conscience, but, like corn and potatoes, carried too far, it becomes a vice. I think I could commit a murder with less hesitation than some people buy a ninepenny calico. And to see that man stand there, balancing probabilities over a piece of ground no bigger than a bed-quilt, as if a nation's fate were at stake, was enough to ruffle a calmer temper than mine. My impetuosity impressed him, however, and he began to lay about him vigorously with hoe and rake and lines, and, in an incredibly short space of time, had a bit of square flatness laid out with wonderful precision. Meanwhile I had ransacked my vegetable-bag, and though lettuce and asparagus were not there, plenty of beets and parsnips and squashes, etc., were. I let him take his choice. He took the first two. The rest were left on my hands. But I had gone too far to recede. They burned in my pocket for a few days, and I saw that I must get them into the ground somewhere. I could not sleep with them in the room. They were wandering shades craving at my hands a burial, and I determined to put them where Banquo's

ghost would not go,—down. Down accordingly they went, but not symmetrically nor simultaneously. I faced Halicarnassus on the subject of the beet-bed, and though I cannot say that either of us gained a brilliant victory, yet I can say that I kept possession of the ground; still, I did not care to risk a second encounter. So I kept my seeds about me continually, and dropped them surreptitiously as occasion offered. Consequently, my garden, taken as a whole, was located where the Penobscot Indian was born,—"all along shore." The squashes were scattered among the corn. The beans were tucked under the brushwood, in the fond hope that they would climb up it. Two tomato-plants were lodged in the potato-field, under the protection of some broken apple-branches dragged thither for the purpose. The cucumbers went down on the sheltered side of a wood-pile. The peas took their chances of life under the sink-nose. The sweet-corn was marked off from the rest by a broomstick,—and all took root alike in my heart.

May I ask you now, O Friend, who, I would fain believe, have followed me thus far with no hostile eyes, to glide in tranced forgetfulness through the white blooms of May and the roses of June, into the warm breath of July afternoons and the languid pulse of August, perhaps even into the mild haze of September and the "flying gold" of brown October? In narrating to you the fruition of my hopes, I shall endeavor to preserve that calm equanimity which is the birthright of royal minds. I shall endeavor not to be unduly elated by success nor unduly depressed by failure, but to state in simple language the result of my experiments, both for an encouragement and a warning. I shall give the history of the several ventures separately, as nearly as I can recollect in the order in which they grew, beginning with the humbler ministers to our appetites, and soaring gradually into the region of the poetical and the beautiful.

BEETS.—The beets came up, little red-veined leaves, struggling for breath among a tangle of Roman wormwood and garlic; and though they exhibited great tenacity of life, they also exhibited great irregularity of purpose. In one spot there would be nothing, in an adjacent spot a whorl of beets, big and little, crowding and jostling and elbowing each other, like school-boys round the red-hot stove on a winter's morning. I knew they had been planted in a right line, and I don't, even now, comprehend why they should not come up in a right line. I weeded them, and though freedom from foreign growth discovered an intention, of straightness, the most casual observer could not but see that skewiness had usurped its place. I repaired to my friend the gardener. He said they must be thinned out and transplanted. It went to my heart to pull up the dear things, but I did it, and set them down again tenderly in the vacant spots. It was evening. The next morning I went to them. Flatness has a new meaning to me since that morning. You can hardly conceive that anything could look so utterly forlorn, disconsolate, disheartened, and collapsed. In fact, they exhibited a degree of depression so entirely beyond what the circumstances demanded, that I was enraged. If they had shown any symptoms of trying to live, I could have sighed and forgiven them; but, on the contrary, they had flopped and died without a struggle, and I pulled them up without a pang, comforting myself with the remaining ones, which throve on their companions' graves, and waxed fat and full and crimson-hearted, in their soft, brown beds. So delighted was I with their luxuriant rotundity, that I made an internal resolve that henceforth I would always plant beets. True, I cannot abide beets. Their fragrance and their flavor are alike nauseating; but they come up, and a beet that will come up is better than a cedar of Lebanon that won't. In all the vegetable kingdom I know of no quality better than this, growth,—nor any quality that will atone for its absence.

PARSNIPS.—They ran the race with an indescribable vehemence that fairly threw the beets into the shade. They trod so delicately at first that I was quite unprepared for such enthusiasm. Lacking the red veining, I could not distinguish them even from the weeds with any certainty, and was forced to let both grow together till the harvest. So both grew together, a perfect jungle. But the parsnips got ahead, and rushed up gloriously, magnificently, bacchanalianly,—as the winds come when forests are rended,—as the waves come when navies are stranded. I am, indeed, troubled with a suspicion that their vitality has all run to leaves, and that, when I go down into the depths of the earth for the

parsnips, I shall find only bread of emptiness. It is a pleasing reflection that parsnips cannot be eaten till the second year. I am told that they must lie in the ground during the winter. Consequently it cannot be decided whether there are any or not till next spring. I shall in the mean time assume and assert without hesitation or qualification that there are as many tubers below the surface as there are leaves above it. I shall thereby enjoy a pleasant consciousness, and the respect of all, for the winter; and if disappointment awaits me in the spring, time will have blunted its keenness for me, and other people will have forgotten the whole subject. You may be sure I shall not remind them of it.

CUCUMBERS.—The cucumbers came up so far and stuck. It must have been innate depravity, for there was no shadow of reason why they should not keep on as they began. They did not. They stopped growing in the prime of life. Only three cucumbers developed, and they hid under the vines so that I did not see them till they were become ripe, yellow, soft, and worthless. They are an unwholesome fruit at best, and I bore their loss with great fortitude.

TOMATOES.—Both dead. I had been instructed to protect them from the frost by night and from the sun by day. I intended to do so ultimately, but I did not suppose there was any emergency. A frost came the first night and killed them, and a hot sun the next day burned up all there was left. When they were both thoroughly dead, I took great pains to cover them every night and noon. No symptoms of revival appearing to reward my efforts, I left them to shift for themselves. I did not think there was any need of their dying, in the first place; and if they would be so absurd as to die without provocation, I did not see the necessity of going into a decline about it. Besides, I never did value plants or animals that have to be nursed, and petted, and coaxed to live. If things want to die, I think they'd better die. Provoked by my indifference, one of the tomatoes flared up and took a new start,—put forth leaves, shot out vines, and covered himself with fruit and glory. The chickens picked out the heart of all the tomatoes as soon as they ripened, which was of no consequence, however, as they had wasted so much time in the beginning that the autumn frosts came upon them unawares, and there wouldn't have been fruit enough ripe to be of any account, if no chicken had ever broken a shell.

SQUASHES.—They appeared above-ground, large-lobed and vigorous. Large and vigorous appeared the bugs, all gleaming in green and gold, like the wolf on the fold, and stopped up all the stomata and ate up all the parenchyma, till my squash-leaves looked as if they had grown for the sole purpose of illustrating net-veined organizations. In consternation I sought again my neighbor the Englishman. He assured me he had 'em on his, too,—lots of 'em. This reconciled me to mine. Bugs are not inherently desirable, but a universal bug does not indicate special want of skill in any one. So I was comforted. But the Englishman said they must be killed. He had killed his. Then I said I would kill mine, too. How should it be done? Oh! put a shingle near the vine at night and they would crawl upon it to keep dry, and go out early in the morning and kill 'em. But how to kill them? Why, take 'em right between your thumb and finger and crush 'em!

As soon as I could recover breath, I informed him confidentially, that, if the world were one great squash, I wouldn't undertake to save it in that way. He smiled a little, but I think he was not overmuch pleased. I asked him why I couldn't take a bucket of water and dip the shingle in it and drown them. He said, well, I could try it. I did try it,—first wrapping my hand in a cloth to prevent contact with any stray bug. To my amazement, the moment they touched the water they all spread unseen wings and flew away, safe and sound. I should not have been much more surprised to see Halicarnassus soaring over the ridge-pole. I had not the slightest idea that they could fly. Of course I gave up the design of drowning them. I called a council of war. One said I must put a newspaper over them and fasten it down at the edges; then they couldn't get in. I timidly suggested that the squashes couldn't get out. Yes, they could, he said,—they'd grow right through the paper. Another said I must surround them with round boxes with the bottoms broken out; for, though they could fly, they couldn't steer, and when they flew up, they just dropped down anywhere, and as there was on the whole a good deal more land on the outside of the boxes than on the inside, the chances were in favor of their dropping on the outside. Another said that ashes must be sprinkled on them. A fourth

said lime was an infallible remedy. I began with the paper, which I secured with no little difficulty; for the wind—the same wind, strange to say—kept blowing the dirt at me and the paper away from me; but I consoled myself by remembering the numberless rows of squash-pies that should crown my labors, and May took heart from Thanksgiving. The next day I peeped under the paper and the bugs were a solid phalanx. I reported at head-quarters, and they asked me if I killed the bugs before I put the paper down. I said no, I supposed it would stifle them,—in fact, I didn't think anything about it, but if I thought anything, that was what I thought. I wasn't pleased to find I had been cultivating the bugs and furnishing them with free lodgings. I went home and tried all the remedies in succession. I could hardly decide which agreed best with the structure and habits of the bugs, but they throve on all. Then I tried them all at once and all o'er with a mighty uproar. Presently the bugs went away. I am not sure that they wouldn't have gone just as soon, if I had let them alone. After they were gone, the vines scrambled out and put forth some beautiful, deep golden blossoms. When they fell off, that was the end of them. Not a squash,—not one,—not a single squash,—not even a pumpkin. They were all false blossoms.

APPLES.—The trees swelled into masses of pink and white fragrance. Nothing could exceed their fluttering loveliness or their luxuriant promise. A few days of fairy beauty, and showers of soft petals floated noiselessly down, covering the earth with delicate snow; but I knew, that, though the first blush of beauty was gone, a mighty work was going on in a million little laboratories, and that the real glory was yet to come. I was surprised to observe, one day, that the trees seemed to be turning red. I remarked to Halicarnassus that that was one of Nature's processes which I did not remember to have seen noticed in any botanical treatise. I thought such a change did not occur till autumn. Halicarnassus curved the thumb and forefinger of his right hand into an arch, the ends of which rested on the wrist of his left coat-sleeve. He then lifted the forefinger high and brought it forward. Then he lifted the thumb and brought it up behind the forefinger, and so made them travel up to his elbow. It seemed to require considerable exertion in the thumb and forefinger, and I watched the progress with interest. Then I asked him what he meant by it.

"That's the way they walk," he replied.

"Who walk?"

"The little fellows that have squatted on our trees."

"What little fellows do you mean?"

"The canker-worms."

"How many are there?"

"About twenty-five decillions, I should think, as near as I can count."

"Why! what are they for? What good do they do?"

"Oh! no end. Keep the children from eating green apples and getting sick."

"How do they do that?"

"Eat 'em themselves."

A frightful idea dawned upon me. I believe I turned a kind of ghastly blue.

"Halicarnassus, do you mean to tell me that the canker-worms are eating up our apples and that we shan't have any?"

"It looks like that exceedingly."

That was months ago, and it looks a great deal more like it now. I watched those trees with sadness at my heart. Millions of brown, ugly, villanous worms gnawed, gnawed, gnawed, at the poor little tender leaves and buds,—held them in foul embrace,—polluted their sweetness with hateful breath. I could almost feel the shudder of the trees in that slimy clasp,—could almost hear the shrieking and moaning of the young fruit that saw its hope of happy life thus slowly consuming; but I was powerless to save. For weeks that loathsome army preyed upon the unhappy, helpless trees, and then spun loathsomely to the ground, and buried itself in the reluctant, shuddering soil. A few dismal little apples escaped the common fate, but when they rounded into greenness and a suspicion of pulp,

a boring worm came and bored them, and they, too, died. No apple-pies at Thanksgiving. No apple-roasting in winter evenings. No pan-pie with hot brown bread on Sunday mornings.

CHERRIES.—They rivalled the apple-blooms in snowy profusion, and the branches were covered with tiny balls. The sun mounted warm and high in the heavens and they blushed under his ardent gaze. I felt an increasing conviction that here there would be no disappointment; but it soon became palpable that another class of depredators had marked our trees for their own. Little brown toes could occasionally be seen peeping from the foliage, and little bare feet left their print on the garden-soil. Humanity had evidently deposited its larva in the vicinity. There was a schoolhouse not very far away, and the children used to draw water from an old well in a distant part of the garden. It was surprising to see how thirsty they all became as the cherries ripened. It was as if the village had simultaneously agreed to breakfast on salt fish. Their wooden bucket might have been the urn of the Danaïdes, judging from the time it took to fill it. The boys were as fleet of foot as young zebras, and presented upon discovery no apology or justification but their heels,—which was a wise stroke in them. A troop of rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed little snips in white pantalets, caught in the act, reasoned with in a semi-circle, and cajoled with candy, were as sweet as distilled honey, and promised with all their innocent hearts and hands not to do so any more. But the real *pièce de résistance* was a mass of pretty well developed crinoline which an informal walk in the infested district brought to light, engaged in a systematic raid upon the tempting fruit. Now, in my country, the presence of unknown individuals in your own garden, plucking your fruit from your trees, without your knowledge and against your will, is universally considered as affording presumptive evidence of—something. In this part of the world, however, I find they do things differently. It doesn't furnish presumptive evidence of anything. If you think it does, you do so at your own risk. I thought it did, and escaped by the skin of my teeth. I hinted my views, and found myself in a den of lions, and was thankful to come out second-best. Second? nay, third-best, fourth-best, no best at all, not even good,—very bad. In short, I was glad to get out with my life. Nor was my repulse confined to the passing hour. The injured innocents come no more for water. I am consumed with inward remorse as I see them daily file majestically past my house to my neighbor's well. I have resolved to plant a strawberry-bed next year, and offer them the fruit of it by way of atonement, and never, under any provocation, hereafter, to assert or insinuate that I have any claim whatever to anything under the sun. If this course, perseveringly persisted in, does not restore the state of quo, I am hopeless. I have no further resources.

The one drop of sweetness in the bitter cup was, that the cherries, being thus let severely alone, were allowed to hang on the trees and ripen. It took them a great while. If they had been as big as hogsheads, I should think the sun might have got through them sooner than he did. They looked ripe long before they were so; and as they were very plenty, the trees presented a beautiful appearance. I bought a stack of fantastic little baskets from a travelling Indian tribe, at a fabulous price, for the sake of fulfilling my long-cherished design of sending fruit to my city friends. After long waiting, Halicarnassus came in one morning with a tin pail full, and said that they were ripe at last, for they were turning purple and falling off; and he was going to have them gathered at once. He had brought in the first-fruits for breakfast. I put them in the best preserve-dish, twined it with myrtle, and set it in the centre of the table. It looked charming,—so ruddy and rural and Arcadian. I wished we could breakfast out-doors; but the summer was one of unusual severity, and it was hardly prudent thus to brave its rigor. We had cup-custards at the close of our breakfast that morning,—very vulgar, but very delicious. We reached the cherries at the same moment, and swallowed the first one simultaneously. The effect was instantaneous and electric. Halicarnassus puckered his face into a perfect wheel, with his mouth for the hub. I don't know how I looked, but I felt badly enough.

"It was unfortunate that we had custards this morning," I remarked. "They are so sweet that the cherries seem sour by contrast. We shall soon get the sweet taste out of our mouths, however."

"That's so!" said Halicarnassus, who *will* be coarse.

We tried another. He exhibited a similar pantomime, with improvements.

My feelings were also the same, intensified.

"I am not in luck to-day," I said, attempting to smile. "I got hold of a sour cherry this time."

"I got hold of a bitter one," said Halicarnassus.

"Mine was a little bitter, too," I added.

"Mine was a little sour, too," said Halicarnassus.

"We shall have to try again," said I.

We did try again.

"Mine was a good deal of both this time," said Halicarnassus. "But we will give them a fair trial."

"Yes," said I, sepulchrally.

We sat there sacrificing ourselves to abstract right for five minutes. Then I leaned back in my chair, and looked at Halicarnassus. He rested his right elbow on the table, and looked at me.

"Well," said he, at last, "how are cherries and things?"

"Halicarnassus," said I, solemnly, "it is my firm conviction that farming is not a lucrative occupation. You have no certain assurance of return, either for labor or capital invested. Look at it. The bugs eat up the squashes. The worms eat up the apples. The cucumbers won't grow at all. The peas have got lost. The cherries are bitter as wormwood and sour as you in your worst moods. Everything that is good for anything won't grow, and everything that grows isn't good for anything."

"My Indian corn, though," began Halicarnassus; but I snapped him up before he was fairly under way. I had no idea of travelling in that direction.

"What am I to do with all those baskets that I bought, I should like to know?" I asked, sharply.

"What did you buy them for?" he asked in return.

"To send cherries to the Hudsons and the Mavericks and Fred Ashley," I replied promptly.

"Why don't you send 'em, then? There's plenty of them,—more than we shall want."

"Because," I answered, "I have not exhausted the pleasures of friendship. Nor do I perceive the benefit that would accrue from turning life-long friends into life-long enemies."

"I'll tell you what we can do," said Halicarnassus. "We can give a party and treat them to cherries. They'll have to eat 'em out of politeness."

"Halicarnassus," said I, "we should be mobbed. We should fall victims to the fury of a disappointed and enraged populace."

"At any rate," said he, "we can offer them to chance visitors."

The suggestion seemed to me a good one,—at any rate, the only one that held out any prospect of relief. Thereafter, whenever friends called singly or in squads,—if the squads were not large enough to be formidable,—we invariably set cherries before them, and with generous hospitality pressed them to partake. The varying phases of emotion which they exhibited were painful to me at first, but I at length came to take a morbid pleasure in noting them. It was a study for a sculptor. By long practice I learned to detect the shadow of each coming change, where a casual observer would see only a serene expanse of placid politeness. I knew just where the radiance, awakened by the luscious, swelling, crimson globes, faded into doubt, settled into certainty, glared into perplexity, fired into rage. I saw the grimace, suppressed as soon as begun, but not less patent to my preternaturally keen eyes. No one deceived me by being suddenly seized with admiration of a view. I knew it was only to relieve his nerves by making faces behind the window-curtains.

I grew to take a fiendish delight in watching the conflict, and the fierce desperation which marked its violence. On the one side were the forces of fusion, a reluctant stomach, an unwilling oesophagus, a loathing palate; on the other, the stern, unconquerable will. A natural philosopher would have gathered new proofs of the unlimited capacity of the human race to adapt itself to circumstances, from the *débris* that strewed our premises after each fresh departure. Cherries were chucked under the sofa, into the table-drawers, behind the books, under the lamp-mats, into the vases, in any and every place where a dexterous hand could dispose of them without detection. Yet their number seemed to suffer no abatement. Like Tityus's liver, they were constantly renewed, though constantly consumed.

The small boys seemed to be suffering from a fit of conscience. In vain we closed the blinds and shut ourselves up in the house to give them a fair field. Not a cherry was taken. In vain we went ostentatiously to church all day on Sunday. Not a twig was touched. Finally I dropped all the curtains on that side of the house, and avoided that part of the garden in my walks. The cherries may be hanging there to this day, for aught I know.

But why do I thus linger over the sad recital? *"Ab uno disce omnes."* (A quotation from Virgil: means, "All of a piece.") There may have been, there probably was, an abundance of sweet-corn, but the broomstick that had marked the spot was lost, and I could in no wise recall either spot or stick. Nor did I ever see or hear of the peas,—or the beans. If our chickens could be brought to the witness-box, they might throw light on the subject. As it is, I drop a natural tear, and pass on to

THE FLOWER-GARDEN.—It appeared very much behind time,—chiefly Roman wormwood. I was grateful even for that. Then two rows of four-o'clocks became visible to the naked eye. They are cryptogamous, it seems. Botanists have hitherto classed them among the Phaenogamia. A sweet-pea and a china-aster dawdled up just in time to get frost-bitten. *"Et praeterea nihil."* (Virgil: means, "That's all.") I am sure it was no fault of mine. I tended my seeds with assiduous care. My devotion was unwearied. I was a very slave to their caprices. I planted them just beneath the surface in the first place, so that they might have an easy passage. In two or three days they all seemed to be lying round loose on the top, and I planted them an inch deep. Then I didn't see them at all for so long that I took them up again, and planted them half-way between. It was of no use. You cannot suit people or plants that are determined not to be suited.

Yet, sad as my story is, I cannot regret that I came into the country and attempted a garden. It has been fruitful in lessons, if in nothing else. I have seen how every evil has its compensating good. When I am tempted to repine that my squashes did not grow, I reflect, that, if they had grown, they would probably have all turned into pumpkins, or if they had stayed squashes, they would have been stolen. When it seems a mysterious Providence that kept all my young hopes underground, I reflect how fine an illustration I should otherwise have lost of what Kossuth calls the solidarity of the human race,—what Paul alludes to, when he says, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. I recall with grateful tears the sympathy of my neighbors on the right hand and on the left, —expressed not only by words, but by deeds. In my mind's eye, Horatio, I see again the baskets of apples, and pears, and tomatoes, and strawberries,—squashes too heavy to lift,—and corn sweet as the dews of Hymettus, that bore daily witness of human brotherhood. I remember, too, the victory which I gained over my own depraved nature. I saw my neighbor prosper in everything he undertook. *Nihil tetigit quod non crevit.* Fertility found in his soil its congenial home, and spanned it with rainbow hues. Every day I walked by his garden and saw it putting on its strength, its beautiful garments. I had not even the small satisfaction of reflecting that amid all his splendid success his life was cold and cheerless, while mine, amid all its failures, was full of warmth,—a reflection which, I have often observed, seems to go a great way towards making a person contented with his lot,—for he had a lovely wife, promising children, and the whole village for his friends. Yet, notwithstanding all these obstacles, I learned to look over his garden-wall with sincere joy.

There is one provocation, however, which I cannot yet bear with equanimity, and which I do not believe I shall ever meet without at least a spasm of wrath, even if my Christian character shall ever become strong enough to preclude absolute tetanus; and I do hereby beseech all persons who would not be guilty of the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin, who do not wish to have on their hands the burden of my ruined temper, to let me go quietly down into the valley of humiliation and oblivion, and not pester me, as they have hitherto done from all parts of the North-American continent, with the infuriating question, "How did you get on with your garden?"

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LYRICS OF THE STREET

I. THE TELEGRAMS

Bring the hearse to the station,
  When one shall demand it, late;
For that dark consummation
  The traveller must not wait.
Men say not by what connivance
  He slid from his weight of woe,
Whether sickness or weak contrivance,
  But we know him glad to go.
        On, and on, and ever on!
            What next?

Nor let the priest be wanting
  With his hollow eyes of prayer,
While the sexton wrenches, panting,
  The stone from the dismal stair.
But call not the friends who left him,
  When Fortune and Pleasure fled;
Mortality hath not bereft him,
  That they should confront him, dead.
        On, and on, and ever on!
            What next?

Bid my mother be ready:
  We are coming home to-night:
Let my chamber be still and shady,
  With the softened nuptial light.
We have travelled so gayly, madly,
  No shadow hath crossed our way;
Yet we come back like children, gladly,
  Joy-spent with our holiday.
        On, and on, and ever on!
            What next?

Stop the train at the landing,
  And search every carriage through;
Let no one escape your handing,
  None shiver or shrink from view.
Three blood-stained guests expect him,
  Three murders oppress his soul;
Be strained every nerve to detect him
  Who feasted, and killed, and stole.
        On, and on, and ever on!

What next?

Be rid of the notes they scattered;
  The great house is down at last;
The image of gold is shattered,
  And never can be recast.
The bankrupts show leaden features,
  And weary, distracted looks,
While harpy-eyed, wolf-souled creatures
  Pry through their dishonored books.
        On, and on, and ever on!
            What next?

Let him hasten, lest worse befall him,
  To look on me, ere I die:
I will whisper one curse to appall him,
  Ere the black flood carry me by.
His bridal? the friends forbid it;
  I have shown them his proofs of guilt:
Let him hear, with my laugh, who did it;
  Then hurry, Death, as thou wilt!
        On, and on, and ever on!
            What next?

Thus the living and dying daily
  Flash forward their wants and words,
While still on Thought's slender railway
  Sit scathless the little birds:
They heed not the sentence dire
  By magical hands exprest,
And only the sun's warm fire
  Stirs softly their happy breast.
        On, and on, and ever on!
            God next!

THE SOUTH BREAKER

IN TWO PARTS

PART I

Just a cap-full of wind, and Dan shook loose the linen, and a straight shining streak with specks of foam shot after us. The mast bent like eel-grass, and our keel was half out of the water. Faith belied her name, and clung to the sides with her ten finger-nails; but as for me, I liked it.

"Take the stick, Georgie," said Dan, suddenly, his cheeks white. "Head her up the wind. Steady. Sight the figurehead on Pearson's loft. Here's too much sail for a frigate."

But before the words were well uttered, the mast doubled up and coiled like a whip-lash, there was a report like the crack of doom, and half of the thing crashed short over the bows, dragging the heavy sail in the waves.

Then there came a great laugh of thunder close above, and the black cloud dropped like a curtain round us: the squall had broken.

"Cut it off, Dan! quick!" I cried. "Let it alone," said he, snapping together his jack-knife; "it's as good as a best bower-anchor. Now I'll take the tiller, Georgie. Strong little hand," said he, bending so that I didn't see his face. "And lucky it's good as strong. It's saved us all.—My God, Georgie! where's Faith?"

I turned. There was no Faith in the boat. We both sprang to our feet, and so the tiller swung round and threw us broadside to the wind, and between the dragging mast and the centre-board drowning seemed too good for us.

"You'll have to cut it off," I cried again; but he had already ripped half through the canvas and was casting it loose.

At length he gave his arm a toss. With the next moment, I never shall forget the look of horror that froze Dan's face.

"I've thrown her off!" he exclaimed. "I've thrown her off!"

He reached his whole length over the boat, I ran to his side, and perhaps our motion impelled it, or perhaps some unseen hand; for he caught at an end of rope, drew it in a second, let go and clutched at a handful of the sail, and then I saw how it had twisted round and swept poor little Faith over, and she had swung there in it like a dead butterfly in a chrysalis. The lightnings were slipping down into the water like blades of fire everywhere around us, with short, sharp volleys of thunder, and the waves were more than I ever rode this side of the bar before or since, and we took in water every time our hearts beat; but we never once thought of our own danger while we bent to pull dear little Faith out of hers; and that done, Dan broke into a great hearty fit of crying that I'm sure he'd no need to be ashamed of. But it didn't last long; he just up and dashed off the tears and set himself at work again, while I was down on the floor rubbing Faith. There she lay like a broken lily, with no life in her little white face, and no breath, and maybe a pulse and maybe not. I couldn't hear a word Dan said, for the wind; and the rain was pouring through us. I saw him take out the oars, but I knew they'd do no good in such a chop, even if they didn't break; and pretty soon he found it so, for he drew them in and began to untie the anchor-rope and wind it round his waist. I sprang to him.

"What are you doing, Dan?" I exclaimed.

"I can swim, at least," he answered.

"And tow us?—a mile? You know you can't! It's madness!"

"I must try. Little Faith will die, if we don't get ashore."

"She's dead now, Dan."

"What! No, no, she isn't. Faith isn't dead. But we must get ashore."

"Dan," I cried, clinging to his arm, "Faith's only one. But if you die so,—and you will!—I shall die too."

"You?"

"Yes; because, if it hadn't been for me, you wouldn't have been here at all."

"And is that all the reason?" he asked, still at work.

"Reason enough," said I.

"Not quite," said he.

"Dan,—for my sake"–

"I can't, Georgie. Don't ask me. I mustn't"—and here he stopped short, with the coil of rope in his hand, and fixed me with his eye, and his look was terrible—"*we* mustn't let Faith die."

"Well," I said, "try it, if you dare,—and as true as there's a Lord in heaven, I'll cut the rope!"

He hesitated, for he saw I was resolute; and I would, I declare I would have done it; for, do you know, at the moment I hated the little dead thing in the bottom of the boat there.

Just then there came a streak of sunshine through the gloom where we'd been plunging between wind and water, and then a patch of blue sky, and the great cloud went blowing down river. Dan threw away the rope and took out the oars again.

"Give me one, Dan," said I; but he shook his head. "Oh, Dan, because I'm so sorry!"

"See to her, then,—fetch Faith to," he replied, not looking at me, and making up with great sturdy pulls.

So I busied myself, though I couldn't do a bit of good. The instant we touched bottom, Dan snatched her, sprang through the water and up the landing. I stayed behind; as the boat recoiled, pushed in a little, fastened the anchor and threw it over, and then followed.

Our house was next the landing, and there Dan had carried Faith; and when I reached it, a great fire was roaring up the chimney, and the tea-kettle hung over it, and he was rubbing Faith's feet hard enough to strike sparks. I couldn't understand exactly what made Dan so fiercely earnest, for I thought I knew just how he felt about Faith; but suddenly, when nothing seemed to answer, and he stood up and our eyes met, I saw such a haggard, conscience-stricken face that it all rushed over me. But now we had done what we could, and then I felt all at once as if every moment that I effected nothing was drawing out murder. Something flashed by the window, I tore out of the house and threw up my arms, I don't know whether I screamed or not, but I caught the doctor's eye, and he jumped from his gig and followed me in. We had a siege of it. But at length, with hot blankets, and hot water, and hot brandy dribbled down her throat, a little pulse began to play upon Faith's temple and a little pink to beat up and down her cheek, and she opened her pretty dark eyes and lifted herself and wrung the water out of her braids; then she sank back.

"Faith! Faith! speak to me!" said Dan, close in her ear. "Don't you know me?"

"Go away," she said, hoarsely, pushing his face with her flat wet palm. "You let the sail take me over and drown me, while you kissed Georgie's hand."

I flung my hand before her eyes.

"Is there a kiss on those fingers?" I cried, in a blaze. "He never kissed my hands or my lips. Dan is your husband, Faith!"

For all answer Faith hid her head and gave a little moan. Somehow I couldn't stand that; so I ran and put my arms round her neck and lifted her face and kissed it, and then we cried together. And Dan, walking the floor, took up his hat and went out, while she never cast a look after him. To think of such a great strong nature and such a powerful depth of feeling being wasted on such a little limp rag! I cried as much for that as anything. Then I helped Faith into my bedroom, and running home, I got her some dry clothes,—after rummaging enough, dear knows! for you'd be more like to find her nightcap in the tea-caddy than elsewhere,—and I made her a corner on the settle, for she was afraid to stay in the bedroom, and when she was comfortably covered there she fell asleep. Dan came in soon and sat down beside her, his eyes on the floor, never glancing aside nor smiling, but gloomier than the grave. As for me, I felt at ease now, so I went and laid my hand on the back of his chair and made him look up. I wanted he should know the same rest that I had, and perhaps he did,—for, still looking up, the quiet smile came floating round his lips, and his eyes grew steady and sweet as they used to be before he married Faith. Then I went bustling lightly about the kitchen again.

"Dan," I said, "if you'd just bring me in a couple of those chickens stalking out there like two gentlemen from Spain."

While he was gone I flew round and got a cake into the bake-kettle, and a pan of biscuit down before the fire; and I set the tea to steep on the coals, because father always likes his tea strong enough to bear up an egg, after a hard day's work, and he'd had that to-day; and I put on the coffee to boil, for I knew Dan never had it at home, because Faith liked it and it didn't agree with her. And then he brought me in the chickens all ready for the pot, and so at last I sat down, but at the opposite side of the chimney. Then he rose, and, without exactly touching me, swept me back to the other side, where lay the great net I was making for father; and I took the little stool by the settle, and not far from him, and went to work.

"Georgie," said Dan, at length, after he'd watched me a considerable time, "if any word I may have said to-day disturbed you a moment, I want you to know that it hurt me first, and just as much."

"Yes, Dan," said I.

I've always thought there was something real noble between Dan and me then. There was I,—well, I don't mind telling you. And he,—yes, I'm sure he loved me perfectly,—you mustn't be startled, I'll tell you how it was,—and always had, only maybe he hadn't known it; but it was deep down in his heart just the same, and by-and-by it stirred. There we were, both of us thoroughly conscious, yet neither of us expressing it by a word, and trying not to by a look,—both of us content to wait for the next life, when we could belong to one another. In those days I contrived to have it always pleasure enough for me just to know that Dan was in the room; and though that wasn't often, I never grudged Faith her right in him, perhaps because I knew she didn't care anything about it. You see, this is how it was.

When Dan was a lad of sixteen, and took care of his mother, a ship went to pieces down there on the island. It was one of the worst storms that ever whistled, and though crowds were on the shore, it was impossible to reach her. They could see the poor wretches hanging in the rigging, and dropping one by one, and they could only stay and sicken, for the surf stove the boats, and they didn't know then how to send out ropes on rockets or on cannon-balls, and so the night fell, and the people wrung their hands and left the sea to its prey, and felt as if blue sky could never come again. And with the bright, keen morning not a vestige of the ship, but here a spar and there a door, and on the side of a sand-hill a great dog watching over a little child that he'd kept warm all night. Dan, he'd got up at turn of tide, and walked down,—the sea running over the road knee-deep,—for there was too much swell for boats; and when day broke, he found the little girl, and carried her up to town. He didn't take her home, for he saw that what clothes she had were the very finest,—made as delicately,—with seams like the hair-strokes on that heart's-ease there; and he concluded that he couldn't bring her up as she ought to be. So he took her round to the rich men, and represented that she was the child of a lady, and that a poor fellow like himself—for Dan was older than his years, you see—couldn't do her justice: she was a slight little thing, and needed dainty training and fancy food, maybe a matter of seven years old, and she spoke some foreign language, and perhaps she didn't speak it plain, for nobody knew what it was. However, everybody was very much interested, and everybody was willing to give and to help, but nobody wanted to take her, and the upshot of it was that Dan refused all their offers and took her himself.

His mother'd been in to our house all the afternoon before, and she'd kept taking her pipe out of her mouth,—she had the asthma, and smoked,—and kept sighing.

"This storm's going to bring me something," says she, in a mighty miserable tone. "I'm sure of it!"

"No harm, I hope, Miss Devereux," said mother.

"Well, Rhody,"—mother's father, he was a queer kind,—called his girls all after the thirteen States, and there being none left for Uncle Mat, he called him after the state of matrimony,—"Well, Rhody," she replied, rather dismally, and knocking the ashes out of the bowl, "I don't know; but

I'll have faith to believe that the Lord won't send me no ill without distincter warning. And that it's good I *have*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.