VARIOUS

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A NIGHT IN THE WATER

That was a pleasant life on picquet, in the delicious early summer of the South, and among the endless flowery forests of that blossoming isle. In the retrospect, I seem to see myself adrift upon a horse's back amid a sea of roses. The various outposts were within a five-mile radius, and it was one long, delightful gallop, day and night. I have a faint impression that the moon shone steadily every night for two months; and yet I remember certain periods of such dense darkness that in riding through the wood-paths it was really unsafe to go beyond a walk, for fear of branches above and roots below; and one of my officers was once shot at by a Rebel scout who stood unperceived at his horse's bridle.

We lived in a dilapidated plantation-house, the walls scrawled with capital charcoal-sketches by R., of the New Hampshire Fourth, with a good map of the island and its paths by C. of the First Massachusetts Cavalry; there was a tangled garden, full of neglected roses and camellias, and we filled the great fireplace with magnolias by day and with logs by night; I slept on a sort of shelf in the corner, bequeathed to me by Major F., my jovial predecessor,—and if I waked up at any time, I could put my head through the broken window, arouse my orderly, and ride off to see if I could catch a picquet asleep. I spell the word with a *q*, because such was the highest authority, in that Department at least, and they used to say at post head-quarters that so soon as the officer in command of the outposts grew negligent, and was guilty of a *k*, he was instantly ordered in.

To those doing outpost-duty on an island, however large, the main-land has all the fascination of forbidden fruit, and on a scale bounded only by the horizon. Emerson says that every house looks ideal until we enter it,—and it is certainly so, if it be just the other side of the hostile lines. Every grove in that blue distance appears enchanted ground, and yonder loitering gray-back, leading his horse to water in the farthest distance, makes one thrill with a desire to hail him, to shoot at him, to capture him, to do anything to bridge this inexorable dumb space that lies between. A boyish feeling, no doubt, and one that time diminishes, without effacing; yet it is a feeling which lies at the bottom of many rash actions in war, and of some brilliant ones. For one, I could never quite outgrow it, though restricted by duty from doing many foolish things in consequence, and also restrained by reverence for certain confidential advisers whom I had always at hand, and who considered it their mission to keep me always on short rations of personal adventure. Indeed, most of that sort of entertainment in the army devolves upon scouts detailed for the purpose, volunteer aides-de-camp and newspaper-reporters,—other officers being expected to be about business more prosaic.

All the excitements of war are quadrupled by darkness; and as I rode along our outer lines at night, and watched the glimmering flames which at regular intervals starred the opposite river-shore, the longing was irresistible to cross the barrier of dusk, and see whether it were men or ghosts who hovered round those dying embers. I had yielded to these impulses in boat-adventures by night,—for it was a part of my instructions to obtain all possible information about the Rebel outposts,—and fascinating indeed it was to glide along, noiselessly paddling, with a dusky guide, through the endless intricacies of those Southern marshes, scaring the reed-birds, which wailed and fled away into the darkness, and penetrating several miles into the interior, between hostile fires, where discovery might be death. Yet there were drawbacks as to these enterprises, since it is not easy for a boat to cross still water, even on the darkest night, without being seen by watchful eyes; and, moreover, the extremes of high and low tide transform so completely the whole condition of those rivers that it needs very nice calculation to do one's work at precisely the right time. To vary the experiment, I had often thought of trying a personal reconnaissance by swimming, at a certain point, whenever circumstances should make it an object.

The opportunity at last arrived, and I shall never forget the glee with which, after several postponements, I finally rode forth, a little before midnight, on a night which seemed made for the purpose. I had, of course, kept my own secret, and was entirely alone. The great Southern fire-flies

were out, not haunting the low ground merely, like ours, but rising to the loftiest tree-tops with weird illumination, and anon hovering so low that my horse often stepped the higher to avoid them. The dewy Cherokee roses brushed my face, the solemn "Chuck-will's-widow" croaked her incantation, and the rabbits raced phantom-like across the shadowy road. Slowly in the darkness I followed the well-known path to the spot where our most advanced outposts were stationed, holding a causeway which thrust itself far out across the separating river,—thus fronting a similar causeway on the other side, while a channel of perhaps three hundred yards, once traversed by a ferry-boat, rolled between. At low tide this channel was the whole river, with broad, oozy marshes on each side; at high tide the marshes were submerged, and the stream was a mile wide. This was the point which I had selected. To ascertain the numbers and position of the picquet on the opposite causeway was my first object, as it was a matter on which no two of our officers agreed.

To this point, therefore, I rode, and dismounting, after being duly challenged by the sentinel at the causeway-head, walked down the long and lonely path. The tide was well up, though still on the flood, as I desired; and each visible tuft of marsh-grass might, but for its motionlessness, have been a prowling boat. Dark as the night had appeared, the water was pale, smooth, and phosphorescent, and I remember that the phrase "wan water," so familiar in the Scottish ballads, struck me just then as peculiarly appropriate. A gentle breeze, from which I had hoped for a ripple, had utterly died away, and it was a warm, breathless Southern night. There was no sound but the faint swash of the coming tide, the noises of the reed-birds in the marshes, and the occasional leap of a fish; and it seemed to my over-strained ear as if every footstep of my own must be heard for miles. However, I could have no more postponements, and the thing must be tried now or never.

Reaching the farther end of the causeway, I found my men couched, like black statues, behind the slight earthwork there constructed. I expected that my proposed immersion would rather bewilder them, but knew that they would say nothing, as usual. As for the lieutenant on that post, he was a steady, matter-of-fact, perfectly disciplined Englishman, who wore a Crimean medal, and never asked a superfluous question in his life. If I had casually remarked to him, "Mr. Hooker, the General has ordered me on a brief personal reconnaissance to the Planet Jupiter, and I wish you to take care of my watch, lest it should be damaged by the Precession of the Equinoxes," he would have responded with a brief "All right, Sir," and a quick military gesture, and have put the thing in his pocket. As it was, I simply gave him the watch, and remarked that I was going to take a swim.

I do not remember ever to have experienced a greater sense of exhilaration than when I slipped noiselessly into the placid water, and struck out into the smooth, eddying current for the opposite shore. The night was so still and lovely, my black statues looked so dream-like at their posts behind the low earthwork, the opposite arm of the causeway stretched so invitingly from the Rebel main, the horizon glimmered so low around me,—for it always appears lower to a swimmer than even to an oarsman,—that I seemed floating in some concave globe, some magic crystal, of which I was the enchanted centre. With each little ripple of my steady progress all things hovered and changed; the stars danced and nodded above; where the stars ended, the great Southern fire-flies began; and closer than the fire-flies, there clung round me a halo of phosphorescent sparkles from the soft salt water.

Had I told any one of my purpose, I should have had warnings and remonstrances enough. The few negroes who did not believe in alligators believed in sharks; the skeptics as to sharks were orthodox in respect to alligators; while those who rejected both had private prejudices as to snapping-turtles. The surgeon would have threatened intermittent fever, the first assistant rheumatism, and the second assistant congestive chills; non-swimmers would have predicted exhaustion, and swimmers cramp; and all this before coming within bullet-range of any hospitalities on the other shore. But I knew the folly of most alarms about reptiles and fishes; man's imagination peoples the water with many things which do not belong there, or prefer to keep out of his way, if they do; fevers and congestions were the surgeon's business, and I always kept people to their own department; cramp and exhaustion were dangers I could measure, as I had often done; bullets were a more substantial

danger, and I must take the chance,—if a loon could dive at the flash, why not I? If I were once ashore, I should have to cope with the Rebels on their own ground, which they knew better than I; but the water was my ground, where I, too, had been at home from boyhood.

I swam as swiftly and softly as I could, although it seemed as if water never had been so still before. It appeared impossible that anything uncanny should hide beneath that lovely mirror; and yet when some floating wisp of reeds suddenly coiled itself around my neck, or some unknown thing, drifting deeper, coldly touched my foot, it gave that undefinable sense of shudder which every swimmer knows, and which especially appeals to the imagination by night. Sometimes a slight sip of brackish water would enter my lips,—for I naturally tried to swim as low as possible,—and then would follow a slight gasping and contest against choking, such as seemed to me a perfect convulsion; for I suppose the tendency to choke and sneeze is always enhanced by the circumstance that one's life may depend on keeping still, just as yawning becomes irresistible where to yawn would be social ruin, and just as one is sure to sleep in church, if one sits in a conspicuous pew. At other times, some unguarded motion would create a splashing which seemed, in the tension of my senses, to be loud enough to be heard at Richmond, although it really mattered not, since there are fishes in those rivers which make as much noise on special occasions as if they were misguided young whales.

As I drew near the opposite shore, the dark causeway projected more and more distinctly, to my fancy at least, and I swam more softly still, utterly uncertain as to how far, in the stillness of air and water, my phosphorescent course could be traced by eye or ear. A slight ripple would have saved me from observation, I was more than ever sure, and I would have whistled for a fair wind as eagerly as any sailor, but that my breath was worth more than anything it was likely to bring. The water became smoother and smoother, and nothing broke the dim surface except a few clomps of rushes and my unfortunate head. The outside of this member gradually assumed to its inside a gigantic magnitude; it had always annoyed me at the hatter's from a merely animal bigness, with no commensurate contents to show for it, and now I detested it more than ever. A physical fooling of turgescence and congestion in that region, such as swimmers often feel, probably increased the impression. I thought with envy of the Aztec children, of the headless horseman of Sleepy Hollow, of Saint Somebody with his head tucked under his arm. Plotinus was less ashamed of his whole body than I of this inconsiderate and stupid appendage. To be sure, I might swim for a certain distance under water. But that accomplishment I had reserved for a retreat, for I knew that the longer I stayed down the more surely I should have to snort like a walrus when I came up again, and to approach an enemy with such a demonstration was not to be thought of.

Suddenly a dog barked. We had certain information that a pack of hounds was kept at a Rebel station a few miles off, on purpose to hunt runaways, and I had heard from the negroes almost fabulous accounts of the instinct of these animals. I knew, that, although water baffled their scent, they yet could recognize in some manner the approach of any person across water as readily as by land; and of the vigilance of all dogs by night every traveller among Southern plantations has ample demonstration. I was now so near that I could dimly see the figures of men moving to and fro upon the end of the causeway, and could hear the dull knock, when one struck his foot against a piece of timber.

As my first object was to ascertain whether there were sentinels at that time at that precise point, I saw that I was approaching the end of my experiment. Could I have once reached the causeway unnoticed, I could have lurked in the water beneath its projecting timbers, and perhaps made my way along the main shore, as I had known fugitive slaves to do, while coming from that side. Or had there been any ripple on the water, to confuse the aroused and watchful eyes, I could have made a circuit and approached the causeway at another point, though I had already satisfied myself that there was only a narrow channel on each side of it, even at high tide, and not, as on our side, a broad expanse of water. Indeed, this knowledge alone was worth all the trouble I had taken, and to attempt much more than this, in the face of a curiosity already roused, would have been a waste of future opportunities.

I could try again, with the benefit of this new knowledge, on a point where the statements of the negroes had always been contradictory.

Resolving, however, to continue the observation a very little longer, since the water felt much warmer than I had expected, and there was no sense of chill or fatigue, I grasped at some wisps of straw or rushes that floated near, gathering them round my face a little, and then, drifting nearer the wharf in what seemed a sort of eddy, was able, without creating further alarm, to make some additional observations on points which it is not best now to particularize. Then, turning my back upon the mysterious shore which had thus far lured me, I sank softly below the surface and swam as far as I could under water.

During this unseen retreat, I heard, of course, all manner of gurglings and hollow reverberations, and could fancy as many rifle-shots as I pleased. But on rising to the surface all seemed quiet, and even I did not create as much noise as I should have expected. I was now at a safe distance, since they were always chary of showing their boats, and they would hardly take personally to the water. What with absorbed attention first, and this submersion afterwards, I had lost all my bearings but the stars, having been long out of sight of my original point of departure. However, the difficulties of the return were nothing; making a slight allowance for the flood-tide, which could not yet have turned, I should soon regain the place I had left. So I struck out freshly against the smooth water, feeling just a little stiffened by the exertion, and with an occasional chill running up the back of the neck, but with no nips from sharks, no nudges from alligators, and not a symptom of fever-and-ague.

Time I could not, of course, measure,—one never can, in a novel position; but, after a reasonable amount of swimming, I began to look, with a natural interest, for the pier which I had quitted. I noticed, with some solicitude, that the woods along the friendly shore made one continuous shadow, and that the line of low bushes on the long causeway could scarcely be relieved against them, yet I knew where they ought to be, and the more doubtful I felt about it, the more I put down my doubts, as if they were unreasonable children. One can scarcely conceive of the alteration made in familiar objects by bringing the eye as low as the horizon, especially by night; to distinguish foreshortening is impossible, and every low near object is equivalent to one higher and more remote. Still I had the stars; and soon my eye, more practised, was enabled to select one precise line of bushes as that which marked the causeway, and for which I must direct my course.

As I swam steadily, but with some sense of fatigue, towards this phantom-line, I found it difficult to keep my faith steady and my progress true; everything appeared to shift and waver, in the uncertain light. The distant trees seemed not trees, but bushes, and the bushes seemed not exactly bushes, but might, after all, be distant trees. Could I be so confident, that, out of all that low stretch of shore, I could select the one precise point where the friendly causeway stretched its long arm to receive me from the water? How easily (some tempter whispered at my ear) might one swerve a little, on either side, and be compelled to flounder over half a mile of oozy marsh on an ebbing tide, before reaching our own shore and that hospitable volley of bullets with which it would probably greet me! Had I not already (thus the tempter continued) been swimming rather unaccountably far, supposing me on a straight track for that inviting spot where my sentinels and my drapery were awaiting my return?

Suddenly I felt a sensation as of fine ribbons drawn softly across my person, and I found myself among some rushes. But what business had rushes there, or I among them? I knew that there was not a solitary spot of shoal in the deep channel where I supposed myself swimming, and it was plain in an instant that I had somehow missed my course, and must be getting among the marshes. I felt confident, to be sure, that I could not have widely erred, but was guiding my course for the proper side of the river. But whether I had drifted above or below the causeway I had not the slightest clue to tell.

I pushed steadily forward, with some increasing sense of lassitude, passing one marshy islet after another, all seeming strangely out of place, and sometimes just reaching with my foot a soft tremulous shoal which gave scarce the shadow of a support, though even that shadow rested my feet.

At one of these moments of stillness, it suddenly occurred to my perception (what nothing but this slight contact could have assured me, in the darkness) that I was in a powerful current, and that this current set *the wrong way*. Instantly a flood of new intelligence came. Either I had unconsciously turned and was rapidly nearing the Rebel shore,—a suspicion which a glance at the stars corrected,—or else it was the tide itself which had turned, and which was sweeping me down the river with all its force, and was also sucking away at every moment the narrowing water from that treacherous expanse of mud out of whose horrible miry embrace I had lately helped to rescue a shipwrecked crew. Either alternative was rather formidable. I can distinctly remember that for about one half-minute the whole vast universe appeared to swim in the same watery uncertainty in which I floated. I began to doubt everything, to distrust the stars, the line of low bushes for which I was wearily striving, the very land on which they grew, if such visionary tiring could be rooted anywhere. Doubts trembled in my mind like the weltering water, and that awful sensation of *having one's feet unsupported*, which benumbs the spent swimmer's heart, seemed to clutch at mine, though not yet to enter it. I was more absorbed in that singular sensation of nightmare, such as one may feel equally when lost by land or by water, as if one's own position were all right, but the place looked for had somehow been preternaturally abolished out of the universe. At best, might not a man in the water lose all his power of direction, and so move in an endless circle until he sank exhausted? It required a deliberate and conscious effort to keep my brain quite cool. I have not the reputation of being of an excitable temperament, but the contrary; yet I could at that moment see my way to a condition in which one might become insane in an instant. It was as if a fissure opened somewhere, and I saw my way into a mad-house; then it closed, and everything went on as before. Once in my life I had obtained a slight glimpse of the same sensation, and then too, strangely enough, while swimming,—in the mightiest ocean-surge into which I had ever dared plunge my mortal body. Keats hints at the same sudden emotion, in a wild poem written among the Scottish mountains. It was not the distinctive sensation which drowning men are said to have, that spasmodic passing in review of one's whole personal history. I had no well-defined anxiety, felt no fear, was moved to no prayer, did not give a thought to home or friends; only it swept over me, as with a sudden tempest, that, if I meant to get back to my own camp, I must keep my wits about me. I must not dwell on any other alternative, any more than a boy who climbs a precipice must look down. Imagination had no business here. That way madness lay. There was a shore somewhere before me, and I must get to it, by the ordinary means, before the ebb laid bare the flats, or swept me below the lower bends of the stream. That was all.

Suddenly a light gleamed for an instant before me, as if from a house in a grove of great trees upon a bank; and I knew that it came from the window of a ruined plantation-building, where our most advanced outposts had their head-quarters. The flash revealed to me every point of the situation. I saw at once where I was, and how I got there: that the tide had turned while I was swimming, and with a much briefer interval of slack-water than I had been led to suppose,—that I had been swept a good way down-stream, and was far beyond all possibility of regaining the point I had left. Could I, however, retain my strength to swim one or two hundred yards farther, of which I had no doubt, and if the water did not ebb too rapidly, of which I had more fear, then I was quite safe. Every stroke took me more and more out of the power of the current, and there might even be an eddy. I could not afford to be carried down much farther, for there the channel made a sweep toward the wrong side of the river; but there was now no reason why this should happen. I could dismiss all fear, indeed, except that of being fired upon by our own sentinels, many of whom were then new recruits, and with the usual disposition to shoot first and investigate afterwards.

I found myself swimming in shallow and shallower water, and the flats seemed almost bare when I neared the shore, where the great gnarled branches of the live-oaks hung far over the muddy bank. Floating on my back for noiselessness, I paddled rapidly in with my hands, expecting momentarily to hear the challenge of the picquet, and the ominous click so likely to follow. I knew that some one should be pacing to and fro, along that beat, but could not tell at what point he might

be at that precise moment. Besides, there was a faint possibility that some chatty corporal might have carried the news of my bath thus far along the line, and they might be partially prepared for this unexpected visitor. Suddenly, like another flash, came the quick, quaint challenge,—

"Halt! Who's go dar?"

"F-f-friend with the c-c-countersign," retorted I, with chilly, but conciliatory energy, rising at full length out of the shallow water, to show myself a man and a brother.

"Ac-vance, friend, and give de countersign," responded the literal soldier, who at such a time would have accosted a spirit of light or goblin damned with no other formula.

I advanced and gave it, he recognizing my voice at once. And then and there, as I stood, a dripping ghost, beneath the trees before him, the unconscionable fellow, wishing to exhaust upon me the utmost resources of military hospitality, deliberately *presented arms*.

Now a soldier on picquet, or at night, usually presents arms to nobody; but a sentinel on camp-guard by day is expected to perform that ceremony to anything in human shape that has two rows of buttons. Here was a human shape, but so utterly buttonless that it exhibited not even a rag to which a button could by any earthly possibility be appended, buttonless even potentially; and my blameless Ethiopian presented arms to even this. Where, then, are the theories of Carlyle, the axioms of "Sartor Resartus," the inability of humanity to conceive "a naked Duke of Windlestraw addressing a naked House of Lords?" Cautioning my adherent, however, as to the proprieties suitable for such occasions thenceforward, I left him watching the river with renewed vigilance, and awaiting the next merman who should report himself.

Finding my way to the building, I hunted up a sergeant and a blanket, got a fire kindled in the dismantled chimney, and sat before it in my single garment, like a moist, but undismayed Choctaw, until my horse and clothing could be brought round from the Causeway. It seemed strange that the morning had not yet dawned, after the uncounted periods that must have elapsed; but when my wardrobe arrived, I looked at my watch and found that my night in the water had lasted precisely one hour.

Galloping home, I turned in with alacrity, and without a drop of whiskey, and waked a few hours after in excellent condition. The rapid changes of which that Department has seen so many —and, perhaps, to so little purpose—soon transferred us to a different scene. I have been on other scouts since then, and by various processes, but never with a zest so novel as was afforded by that night's experience. The thing soon got wind in the regiment, and led to only one ill consequence, so far as I know. It rather suppressed a way I had of lecturing the officers on the importance of reducing their personal baggage to a minimum. They got a trick of congratulating me, very respectfully, on the thoroughness with which I had once conformed my practice to my precepts.

ON A LATE VENDUE

The red flag—not the red flag of the loathed and deadly pestilence that has destroyed so many lives and disfigured so many fair and so many manly countenances, but (in some circumstances) the scarcely less ominous flag of the auctioneer—has been displayed from the handsome and substantial red-brick house in Kensington-Place Gardens, London, in which Thackeray lately lived, and in which he wrote the opening chapters of his last and never-to-be-completed work, which we are all reading with mingled pleasure and regret.

I rejoice to see the flags and pennants gracefully waving from the masts of the outward or the inward bound ship; to see our beautiful national ensign,—the ensign that is destined sooner or later, so all loyal and patriotic men and women hope and believe, triumphantly to float over the largest, the freest, the happiest, the most prosperous country in the whole wide world,—to see the stars and stripes fluttering in the breeze from the city flag-staff and the village liberty-pole; to see the dancing banners and the fluttering pennons of a regiment of brave and stalwart men marching in all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war to the defence of their country in this her hour of danger and of need. As a child, I loved to see the colors of the holiday-soldiers flapping in the wind and flaunting in the sun on "muster-day." Nay, was not an uncle of mine (he is an old man now, and is fond of bragging of the brave days of old, when he was a gay and gallant sunshine-soldier) the standard-bearer of a once famous company of fair-weather soldiers?—dead now, most of them, and their

> "bones are dust,
> And their good swords rust";

—and did not this daring and heroic uncle of mine, while bravely upbearing his gorgeous silken banner (a gift of the beautiful and all-accomplished ladies of Seaport) in a well-contested sham fight, receive, from the accidental discharge of a field-piece, an honorable and soldier-like wound, and of which he ever after boasted louder, and took more pride in, than the bravest veteran in Grant's gallant army of the scars and injuries received at the siege of Vicksburg? And no wonder at that, perhaps. For you will find hundreds who have been cut by the sword or pierced by the bullet of a Rebel, to one who has been ever so slightly wounded upon a holiday training-field.

But I never could, and I never shall, abide the sight of the red and ruthless flag of the vendue-master. 'Tis a signal that death is still busy, and that to many the love of money is greater than the love of friends and of those nearer and dearer than friends,—that fortune is fickle and that prosperity has fled,—that humbugs and sharpers are alive and active. 'Tis a reminder—and therefore may have its use in the world—of our mortality, an admonisher of our pride, a represser of our love of greed and gain. 'Tis evidently an invention of Satan's, this selling by vendue; and perhaps the first auction was that by which Cain sold the house and furniture of his brother Abel, then lately deceased. If there were no such thing in the world as death and misfortune and humbug, that bit of blood-colored bunting would be but seldom flaunting in the wind.

Charles Lamb counsels those who would enjoy true peace and quiet to retire into a Quaker meeting; and if our sentimental readers (and for such only is this paper written) would find wherewithal to feed and pamper their melancholy, let them follow the mercenary flags, and become haunters of auctions,—let them attend the sales of the effects of their deceased friends and acquaintances,—let them see A's favorite horse, or B's favorite country-seat, or C's favorite books and pictures knocked down, amid the laughter of the crowd and the smart sayings and witty retorts of the auctioneer, to the highest bidder,—and they will be sadder, if not wiser, men than they were before. Such scenes should have more effect on them than all the fine sermons on the vanities and nothings of life ever preached. Sir Richard Steele, in his beautiful paper, in the "Tatler," on "The

Death of Friends," says, in speaking of his mother's sorrow for his father's death, there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport that made pity the weakness of his heart ever since; and perhaps it is owing to the impressions I received at the first auction I ever attended that I am now an inveterate sentimentalist.

How well I remember that auction! Looking back "through the dim posterns of the mind" into the far-off days of my childhood, I see, among other things, the large and comfortable mansion—it was the home of plenty and the temple of hospitality—in which I passed some of the goldenest hours of my boyhood. But the finest play has an end, and the sweetest feasts and the merriest pastimes do not last forever. Very suddenly, indeed, did my visits to that happy home cease. For my good friends of the "great house"—the dearest old lady and the kindest and merriest old gentleman that ever patted a little boy on the head—were both seized (oh, woe the day!) by a terrible disease, and died in spite of all that the great doctor from Boston did to cure them. The last time I entered the dear old house was on a beautiful balmy summer morning; the birds were singing as I have never heard them sing since, and all Nature seemed as glad and exultant as if death, misfortune, and auctioneers were banished from the world. I found there, in place of the late kind host and hostess, a crowd—so they seemed to me—of rude and coarse-minded people; and I saw the hateful red flag of the auctioneer hanging over the door.

An eagle in a dove-cot, a fox in a barn-yard, a wolf among sheep, is mild, merciful, and humane, when compared with the flock of human vultures that had invaded this once happy residence, and were greedily stripping it of all that the taste and the wealth of its late occupants had furnished it with. Should I live to be a thousand years old, I do not think I should forget the unladylike proceedings of sundry old women at that auction. With what a free and contemptuous manner they examined the fine old furniture, and handled the fine old china, and coolly rummaged and ransacked every nook and corner, and peeped and pried into every box, chest, and closet that was not locked! And their tongues, you may be sure, were not idle the while!

The auctioneer was a little dried-up mummy of a man, the ugliness of whose countenance was, as it were, emphasized by a disagreeable leer which would ever and anon deepen into a broad grin; this man, with his dreary jokes and vapid small-talk, was equally repulsive to me.

Oh, the tap of his little hammer did knock against my very heart!

Of all the hammers in this busy and hammering world, from the huge forge-hammer with which the brawny blacksmith deals telling blows upon the glowing iron and beats it into shape, to the tiny hammer that the watchmaker so deftly handles, the ivory-headed, ebony-handled instrument of the auctioneer is the most potent. From the day it was first upraised by the original auctioneer—the nameless and unknown founder of a mighty line of auctioneers—over the chattels of some unfortunate mortal, to the present time, when the red flag is constantly waving in all the great cities and towns of the world, what an immense amount of property of all kinds and descriptions has come under that little instrument! At its fall the ancestral acres of how many spendthrift heirs have passed away from their families forever into the hands of wealthy plebeian parvenus! By a few strokes Dives's splendid mansion, and Crœsus's magnificent country-seat, and Phaëton's famous fast horses become the property of others. At its tap human beings have been sold into worse than Egyptian bondage.

Horace Walpole confidently hoped that his famous collection of *virtù* would be the envy and admiration of the relic-mongers and the curiosity-seekers of two or three hundred years hence; but he had not been dead fifty years before the red flag was waving over Strawberry Hill, and it was not taken down till the villa had been despoiled of all the curious and costly toys and bawbles with which it was packed and crammed. At each stroke of the hammer,—and for four-and-twenty days the quaint Gothic mansion resounded with the "Going, going, gone" of the auctioneer,—at every stroke of the hammer Walpole must have turned uneasily in his grave; for at every stroke of that fatal implement some beautiful miniature, or rare engraving, or fine painting, or precious old coin, or beloved old

vase, or bit of curious old armor, or equally curious relic of the olden time, passed into the possession of some unknown person or other.

And the Duke of Roxburghe's magnificent collection of rare, curious, and valuable books, in the gathering of which he spent a goodly portion of his life, and evinced the policy and finesse of the most wily statesman and the shrewdness and cunning of a Jew money-lender, was soon after his decease scattered, by the hammer of Evans, over England and the Continent. A circumstantial history of this memorable sale was written by Dibdin the bibliomaniac.

I do not, however, grieve much—indeed, to state the precise truth, I do not grieve at all—at the dismantling of Strawberry Hill, or at the sale of the Roxburghe library; but at the vendition of Samuel Johnson's dusty and dearly loved books (they were sold by Mr. Christie, "at his Great Room in Pall-Mall," on Wednesday, February 16, 1785) I own to being a trifle sad and sentimental. For Walpole, with all his cleverness, is a man one cannot love; and as for the bibliographical Duke, he evidently thought more of a rare edition or a unique copy than of all the charms of wit, poetry, or eloquence. I suspect that a splendid binding would please him more than a splendid passage. Whereas Johnson (he was never without a book in his pocket to read at by-times when he had nothing else to do) had a scholar's love for books, and liked them for what they contained, and not merely because they were rare and costly.

Neither can I think unmoved of the dispersion "under the hammer" of the fine library at Greta Hall, which Southey had taken so much pains and pleasure in collecting, and which was, as his son has observed, the pride of his eyes and the joy of his heart,—a library which contained many a "monarch folio," and many a fine old quarto, and thousands of small, but precious volumes of ancient lore, and which was particularly rich in rare old Spanish and Portuguese books. Many of the old volumes in this library had seen such hard service, and had been so roughly handled by former owners, that they were in a very ragged condition when they came into Southey's possession; and as he could not afford to have them equipped in serviceable leather, his daughters and female friends comfortably and neatly clothed them in colored cotton prints. The twelve or fourteen hundred volumes thus bound filled an entire room, which the poet designated as the "Cottonian Library." I saw, a year or two ago, among the costly and valuable works upon the shelves of a Boston bookstore, two or three volumes of this "Cottonian Library." They are not there now. Perhaps the lucky purchaser of them may be a reader of this article. If so, let me congratulate him upon possessing such rare and interesting memorials of the famous and immortal biographer of Doctor Daniel Dove of Doncaster.

And sure I am that no gentle reader can contemplate the fate of Charles Lamb's library without becoming a prey to

"Mild-eyed melancholy."

Elia's books,—his "midnight darlings," his "folios," his "huge Switzer-like tomes of choice and massy divinity," his "kind-hearted play-books," his book of "Songs and Posies," his rare old treatises, and quaint and curious tractates,—the rich gleanings from the old London book-stalls by one who knew a good book, as Falstaff knew the Prince, by instinct,—books that had been the solace and delight of his life, the inspirers and prompters of his best and noblest thoughts, the food of his mind, and the nourishers of his fancies, ideas, and feelings,—these books, with the exception of those retained by some of Elia's personal friends, were, after Mary Lamb's death, purchased by an enterprising New-York bookseller, and shipped to America, where Lamb has ever had more readers and truer appreciators than in England. The arrival in New York of his "shivering folios" created quite a sensation among the Cisatlantic admirers of "the gentle Elia." The lovers of rare old books and the lovers of Charles Lamb jostled each other in the way to Bartlett and Welford's shop, where the treasures (having escaped the perils of the sea) were safely housed, and where a crowd of *literati* was constantly engaged in examining them.

The sale was attended by a goodly company of book-collectors and book-readers. All the works brought fair prices, and were purchased by (or for) persons in various parts of the country. Among the bidders were (I am told) Geoffrey Crayon,—Mr. Sparrowgrass,—Clark, of the "Knickerbocker" magazine,—that lover of the angle and true disciple of Izaak Walton, the late Rev. Dr. Bethune,—Burton, the comedian,—and other well-known authors, actors, and divines. The black-letter Chaucer —Speght's edition, folio, London, 1598,—the identical copy spoken of by Elia in his letter to Ainsworth, the novelist—was knocked down to Burton for twenty-five dollars. I know not who was the fortunate purchaser of "The Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle,"—an especial favorite of Lamb's. Neither do I know the name of the buyer of "The Works of Michael Drayton." They brought twenty-eight dollars. A number of volumes (one of them my correspondent opines was "The Dunciad," *variorum* edition) were bought by an enthusiastic lover of Elia who came all the way from St. Louis on purpose to attend this auction. The English nation should have purchased Lamb's library. But instead of comfortably filling an alcove or two in the British Museum, it crossed the Atlantic and was widely scattered over the United States of America. Will it ever be brought together again? Ah, me! such things do not happen in the annals of books.

'Tis no wonder that the old blind scholar, Bardo de' Bardi, in George Eliot's grand story of "Romola," knowing as he did the usual fate of private libraries, manifested a constant fear that his noble collection of books would be merged in some other library after his death. Every generous soul must heartily despise Tito Melema for basely disposing of Bardo's library for lucre. There are plenty of good people, however, who would uphold him in that transaction. Indeed, do not most of us with unseemly haste and unnatural greed dispose of the effects of our deceased friends and relations? The funeral is hardly over before we begin to get ready for the auction. "I preserve," says Montaigne, "a bit of writing, a seal, a prayer-book, a particular sword, that has been used by my friends and predecessors, and have *not* thrown the long staves my father carried in his hand out of my closet." If the essayist lived in these days, and followed the customs that now obtain, he would send the sword and the staves, along with the other useless and (to him) worthless tokens and remembrancers of the dead and gone Montaignes, to the auction-room, and cheerfully pocket the money they brought.

Thackeray had been dead but a few weeks when a scene similar to the one he has so truthfully described in the seventeenth chapter of "Vanity Fair" occurred at his own late residence. The voice of "Mr. Hammerdown" was heard in the house, and the rooms were filled with a motley crowd of auction-haunters and relic-hunters, (among whom, of course, were Mr. Davids and Mr. Moses,)—a rabble-rout of thoughtless and unfeeling men and women, eager to get an "inside view" of the home of the great satirist. The wine in his cellars,—the pictures upon his walls,—the books in his library, —the old "cane-bottomed chair" in which he sat while writing many of his best works, and which he has immortalized in a fine ballad,—the gifts of kind friends, liberal publishers, and admiring readers, —yea, his house itself, and the land it stands on,—passed under the hammer of the auctioneer. O good white head, low lying in the dust of Kensal Green! it matters little to thee now what becomes of the red brick mansion built so lovingly in the style of Queen Anne's time, and filled with such admirable taste from cellar to roof; but many a pilgrim from these shores will step aside from the roar of London and pay a tribute of remembrance to the house where lived and died the author of "Henry Esmond" and "Vanity Fair."

THE RIDE TO CAMP

When all the leaves were red or brown,
Or golden as the summer sun,
And now and then came flickering down
Upon the grasses hoar and dun,
Through which the first faint breath of frost
Had as a scorching vapor run,
I rode, in solemn fancies lost,
To join my troop, whose low tents shone
Far vanward to our camping host.
Thus as I slowly journeyed on,
I was made suddenly aware
That I no longer rode alone.
Whence came that strange, incongruous pair?
Whether to make their presence plain
To mortal eyes from earth or air
The essence of these spirits twain
Had clad itself in human guise,
As in a robe, is question vain.
I hardly dared to turn my eyes,
So faint my heart beat; and my blood,
Checked and bewildered with surprise,
Within its aching channels stood,
And all the soldier in my heart
Scarce mustered common hardihood.
But as I paused, with lips apart,
Strong shame, as with a sturdy arm,
Shook me, and made my spirit start,
And all my stagnant life grew warm;

Till, with my new-found courage wild,
Out of my mouth there burst a storm
Of song, as if I thus beguiled
My way with careless melody:
Whereat the silent figures smiled.
Then from a haughty, asking eye
I scanned the uninvited pair,
And waited sternly for reply.
One shape was more than mortal fair;
He seemed embodied out of light;
The sunbeams rippled through his hair;
His cheeks were of the color bright
That dyes young evening, and his eyes
Glowed like twin planets, that to sight
Increase in lustre and in size,
The more intent and long our gaze.

Full on the future's pain and prize,
Half seen through hanging cloud and haze,
His steady, far, and yearning look
Blazed forth beneath his crown of bays.
His radiant vesture, as it shook,
Dripped with great drops of golden dew;
And at each step his white steed took,
The sparks beneath his hoof-prints flew,
As if a half-cooled lava-flood
He trod, each firm step breaking through.
This figure seemed so wholly good,
That as a moth which reels in light,
Unknown till then, nor understood,
My dazzled soul swam; and I might
Have swooned, and in that presence died,
From the mere splendor of the sight,
Had not his lips, serene with pride
And cold, cruel purpose, made me swerve
From aught their fierce curl might deride.
A clarion of a single curve
Hung at his side by slender bands;
And when he blew, with faintest nerve,
Life burst throughout those lonely lands;
Graves yawned to hear, Time stood aghast,
The whole world rose and clapped its hands.
Then on the other shape I cast
My eyes. I know not how or why
He held my spellbound vision fast.
Instinctive terror bade me fly,
But curious wonder checked my will.
The mysteries of his awful eye,
So dull, so deep, so dark, so chill,
And the calm pity of his brow
And massive features hard and still,
Lovely, but threatening, and the bow
Of his sad neck, as if he told

Earth's graves and sorrows as they grow,
Cast me in musings manifold
Before his pale, unanswering face.
A thousand winters might have rolled
Above his head. I saw no trace
Of youth or age, of time or change,
Upon his fixed immortal grace.
A smell of new-turned mould, a strange,
Dank, earthen odor from him blew,
Cold as the icy winds that range
The moving hills which sailors view
Floating around the Northern Pole,

With horrors to the shivering crew.
His garments, black as minèd coal,
Cast midnight shadows on his way;
And as his black steed softly stole,
Cat-like and stealthy, jocund day
Died out before him, and the grass,
Then sear and tawny, turned to gray.
The hardy flowers that will not pass
For the shrewd autumn's chilling rain
Closed their bright eyelids, and, alas!
No summer opened them again.
The strong trees shuddered at his touch,
And shook their foliage to the plain.
A sheaf of darts was in his clutch;
And wheresoe'er he turned the head
Of any dart, its power was such
That Nature quailed with mortal dread,
And crippling pain and foul disease
For sorrowing leagues around him spread.
Whene'er he cast o'er lands and seas
That fatal shaft, there rose a groan;
And borne along on every breeze
Came up the church-bell's solemn tone,
And cries that swept o'er open graves,
And equal sobs from cot and throne.
Against the winds she tasks and braves,
The tall ship paused, the sailors sighed,
And something white slid in the waves.
One lamentation, far and wide,
Followed behind that flying dart.
Things soulless and immortal died,
As if they filled the self-same part;
The flower, the girl, the oak, the man,
Made the same dust from pith or heart,
Then spoke I, calmly as one can
Who with his purpose curbs his fear,
And thus to both my question ran:—
"What two are ye who cross me here,
Upon these desolated lands,
Whose open fields lie waste and drear

Beneath the tramplings of the bands
Which two great armies send abroad,
With swords and torches in their hands?"
To which the bright one, as a god
Who slowly speaks the words of fate,
Towards his dark comrade gave a nod,
And answered:—"I anticipate
The thought that is your own reply.

You know him, or the fear and hate
Upon your pallid features lie.
Therefore I need not call him Death:
But answer, soldier, who am I?"
Thereat, with all his gathered breath,
He blew his clarion; and there came,
From life above and life beneath,
Pale forms of vapor and of flame,
Dim likenesses of men who rose
Above their fellows by a name.
There curved the Roman's eagle-nose,
The Greek's fair brows, the Persian's beard,
The Punic plume, the Norman bows;
There the Crusader's lance was reared;
And there, in formal coat and vest,
Stood modern chiefs; and one appeared,
Whose arms were folded on his breast,
And his round forehead bowed in thought,
Who shone supreme above the rest.
Again the bright one quickly caught
His words up, as the martial line
Before my eyes dissolved to nought:—
"Soldier, these heroes all are mine;
And I am Glory!" As a tomb
That groans on opening, "Say, were thine,"
Cried the dark figure. "I consume
Thee and thy splendors utterly.
More names have faded in my gloom
Than chronicles or poesy
Have kept alive for babbling earth
To boast of in despite of me."
The other cried, in scornful mirth,
"Of all that was or is thou curse,
Thou dost o'errate thy frightful worth!
Between the cradle and the hearse,
What one of mine has lived unknown,
Whether through triumph or reverse?
For them the regal jewels shone,
For them the battled line was spread;
Victorious or overthrown,
My splendor on their path was shed.
They lived their life, they ruled their day:
I hold no commerce with the dead.
Mistake me not, and falsely say,

'Lo, this is slow, laborious Fame,
Who cares for what has passed away,'—
My twin-born brother, meek and tame,
Who troops along with crippled Time,

And shrinks at every cry of shame,
And halts at every stain and crime;
While I, through tears and blood and guilt,
Stride on, remorseless and sublime.
War with his offspring as thou wilt;
Lay thy cold lips against their cheek.
The poison or the dagger-hilt
Is what my desperate children seek.
Their dust is rubbish on the hills;
Beyond the grave they would not speak.
Shall man surround his days with ills,
And live as if his only care
Were how to die, while full life thrills
His bounding blood? To plan and dare,
To use life is life's proper end:
Let death come when it will, and where!"—
"You prattle on, as babes that spend
Their morning half within the brink
Of the bright heaven from which they wend;
But what I am you dare not think.
Thick, brooding shadow round me lies;
You stare till terror makes you wink;
I go not, though you shut your eyes.
Unclose again the loathful lid,
And lo, I sit beneath the skies,
As Sphinx beside the pyramid!"
So Death, with solemn rise and fall
Of voice, his sombre mind undid.
He paused; resuming,—"I am all;
I am the refuge and the rest;
The heart aches not beneath my pall.
O soldier, thou art young, unpressed
By snarling grief's increasing swarm;
While joy is dancing in thy breast,
Fly from the future's fated harm;
Rush where the fronts of battle meet,
And let me take thee on my arm!"
Said Glory,—"Warrior, fear deceit,
Where Death gives counsel. Run thy race;
Bring the world cringing to thy feet!
Surely no better time nor place
Than this, where all the Nation calls
For help, and weakness and disgrace
Lag in her tents and council-halls,
And down on aching heart and brain
Blow after blow unbroken falls.
Her strength flows out through every vein;
Mere time consumes her to the core;

Her stubborn pride becomes her bane.
In vain she names her children o'er;
They fail her in her hour of need;
She mourns at desperation's door.
Be thine the hand to do the deed,
To seize the sword, to mount the throne,
And wear the purple as thy meed!
No heart shall grudge it; not a groan
Shall shame thee. Ponder what it were
To save a land thus twice thy own!"
Use gave a more familiar air
To my companions; and I spoke
My heart out to the ethereal pair:—
"When in her wrath the Nation broke
Her easy rest of love and peace,
I was the latest who awoke.
I sighed at passion's mad increase.
I strained the traitors to my heart.
I said, 'We vex them; let us cease.'
I would not play the common part.
Tamely I heard the Southrons' brag:
I said, 'Their wrongs have made them smart.'
At length they struck our ancient flag,—
Their flag as ours, the traitors damned!—
And braved it with their patchwork-rag.
I rose, when other men had calmed
Their anger in the marching throng;
I rose, as might a corpse embalmed,
Who hears God's mandate, 'Right my wrong!'
I rose and set me to His deed,
With His great Spirit fixed and strong.
I swear, that, when I drew this sword,
And joined the ranks, and sought the strife,
I drew it in Thy name, O Lord!
I drew against my brother's life,
Even as Abraham on his child
Drew slowly forth his priestly knife.
No thought of selfish ends defiled
The holy fire that burned in me;
No gnawing care was thus beguiled.
My children clustered at my knee;
Upon my braided soldier's coat
My wife looked,—ah, so wearily!—
It made her tender blue eyes float.
And when my wheeling rowels rang,
Or on the floor my sabre smote,
The sound went through her like a pang.
I saw this; and the days to come
Forewarned me with an iron clang,

That drowned the music of the drum,
That made the rousing bugle faint;
And yet I sternly left my home,—

Haply to fall by noisome taint
Of foul disease, without a deed
To sound in rhyme or shine in paint;
But, oh, at least, to drop a seed,
Humble, but faithful to the last,
Sown by my Country in her need!
O Death, come to me, slow or fast;
I'll do my duty while I may!
Though sorrow burdens every blast,
And want and hardship on me lay
Their bony gripes, my life is pledged,
And to my Country given away!
Nor feel I any hope, new-fledged,
Arise, strong Glory, at thy voice.
Our sword the people's will has edged,
Our rule stands on the people's choice.
This land would mourn beneath a crown,
Where born slaves only could rejoice.
How should the Nation keep it down?
What would a despot's fortunes be,
After his days of strength had flown,
Amidst this people, proud and free,
Whose histories from such sources run?
The thought is its own mockery.
I pity the audacious one
Who may ascend that thorny throne,
And bide a single setting sun.
Day dies; my shadow's length has grown;
The sun is sliding down the west.
That trumpet in my camp was blown.
From yonder high and wooded crest
I shall behold my squadron's camp,
Prepared to sleep its guarded rest
In the low, misty, poisoned damp
That wears the strength, and saps the heart,
And drains the surgeon's watching lamp.
Hence, phantoms! in God's peace depart!
I was not fashioned for your will:
I scorn the trump, and brave the dart!"
They grinned defiance, lingering still.
"I charge ye quit me, in His name
Who bore His cross against the hill!—
By Him who died a death of shame,
That I might live, and ye might die,—
By Christ the Martyr!"—As a flame

Leaps sideways when the wind is high,
The bright one bounded from my side,
At that dread name, without reply;
And Death drew in his mantle wide,
And shuddered, and grew ghastly pale,
As if his dart had pricked his side.
There came a breath, a lonely wail,

Out of the silence o'er the land;
Whether from souls of bliss or bale,
What mortal brain may understand?
Only I marked the phantoms went
Closely together, hand in hand,
As if upon one errand bent.

THE TRUE STORY OF LUIGI

A white dove flew down into the market-place one summer morning, and, undisturbed among all the wheels and hoofs, followed the footsteps of Luigi.

He carried in one hand a sunflower, and thoughtlessly, while it hung there, with nervous fingers scattered the seeds as he went his way. So that the dove cooed in her little swelling throat, gathered what Luigi spilled, and, startled at last by a frisking hound, flew up and alighted on the tray which Luigi's other hand poised airily on his head, and was borne along with all the company of fair white things there in the sunshine.

The street-urchins warned Luigi of the intruder among his wares, and then, slyly putting up his hand, the boy tossed the seeds in a shower about the tray. Off flew the dove, and back with the returning gust she fluttered, and, pausing only to catch her seed, she came and went, wheeling in flashing circles round his head as he pursued his path.

It was at the pretty picture he thus presented, as, having left the market-place, he came upon the higher streets of the town, that a lady, looking from her window, made exclaim. The kind face, the pleasant voice, attracted him; in a moment after, while she was yet thinking of it, the door was pushed partly open, a dark boy, smiling, appeared, followed by the unslung tray, and a voice like a flute said,—

"*Sono io*,—it is I. Will the lady buy?"

And then the image-vender showed his wares.

The lady chaffered with him a moment, and at its close he was evidently paying no attention to what she said, but was listening to a voice from the adjoining room, the clear voice of a girl singing her Italian exercises.

His face was in a glow, he bent to catch the words with signalling finger and glittering eyes; it was plainly neither the deftly sweet accompaniment nor the melody that charmed him, but the language: the language was his own.

With the cadence of the measure the sound was broken capriciously, the book had been thrown down, and the singer herself stood balancing in the doorway between the rooms, a hand on either side,—still lightly trilling her scales, smiling, beaming, blue-eyed, rosy. The sunbeam that entered behind the shade swinging in the wind fell upon the beautiful masses of her light-brown hair, and illumined all the shifting color that played with such delicate suffusion upon her cheek and chin; her face was a deep, innocent smile of joy; she would have been dazzling but for the blushes that seemed to go and come with her breath and make her human; and so much did she embody one's ideal of the first woman that no one wondered when all called her Eve, although her name was Rosamond, and she was the Rose of the World.

Directly Eve saw the boy kneeling there over his tray, the cast suspended in his hand, as he leaned intently forward with the rich carmine deepening the golden tint of his brow and with that yellow fire in his wine-dark eyes, she ceased singing, and, not hesitating to mimic the well-known call, cried,—

"Images?"

Then Luigi remembered where he was, and answered the question asked five minutes since.

"Signora, seven shillings."

"That is reasonable, now," said the lady. "I will have it for that sum. Do you cast these things yourself?"

"My master and I."

"Have you been long here?"

"Alas! much, much time," said he, with melancholy earnestness.

"And from what part of Italy did you come?" she kindly asked.

"*Vengo da Roma*" replied the boy, drawing himself up proudly.

"The Roman peasant is a prince, mamma," said Eve quickly, in an undertone.

Luigi glanced up instantly and smiled, and offered to her a little plaster cherub, silver-gilt, just spreading wings for flight.

"It is for her," said he, with an appealing look at the mother. "For her,—*la principessina*. I myself made it."

No one perceived his adroit under-meaning; but Eva bethought herself of her school-phrases, and venturously selected one.

"*È grazioso*!" said she.

Luigi's face kindled anew; it seemed as if the sound of his native tongue were like some magic wand that called the blind blood to his cheek or drove it into the pools of his heart; the smile broke all over his face as light dances on burnished gold; he turned to her boldly with outstretched hands, like some one asking an alms.

"Give to me a song," he said.

"*Volontieri*" quoth Eve, in hesitating accent, and flitted back to her piano. Without a thought, he followed.

It was a little song of flowers and sunshine that Eve began to carol over the carolling keys; the words fell into the sweetness of the air, that seemed laden with the morning murmur of bees and blossoms; it was but a verse or two, with a refrain that went repeating all the honeyed burden, till Luigi's face fairly burned with pleasure, where he stood at timid distance in the doorway.

"*Ciò mi fa bene!* That does me good!" cried he, as she rose. "Ah, Signorina, I am happy here!"

Then he turned and found the elder lady counting out his money. He received the seven shillings quietly, as his due; but when she would have paid him for the cherub, he pushed the silver swiftly back.

"It is a gift!" said he, with spirit.

"No, no," said Eve. "I should like it, but I must pay for it. You will be so kind as to take the price?" she asked, her hand extended, and a winning grace irradiating all her changing rosy countenance.

A shadow fell over the boy's face, like that of a cloud skimming down a sunny landscape.

"*A Lei non posso dar un rifiuto*," said he, meeting her shining eyes; and he gravely gathered the money and slung his tray.

As he raised it, Eve laid along its side a branch of unsullied day-lilies that had been filling the room with their heavy fragrance. The image-boy interested her; he was a visible creature of those foreign fairy-shores of which she had dreamed; that she did anything but show kindness to a vagrant whom she would not see again never crossed her mind; perhaps, too, she liked that Italy, in his person, should admire her,—that was pardonable. But, at the action, the shadow swept away from the boy's face again, all his lights and darks came flashing out, eyes and teeth and color sparkling in his smile, like sunshine after rain; he made his low obeisance, poised the tray upon his head, and, with a wave of his hand, went out.

"*A rivederla*!" he called back to her from the door, and was gone.

And soon far down the street they heard his musical cry again; and perhaps the little distant dove, who had forsaken him on entrance, also caught the sound, and was reminded by it, as he pecked along the dusty thoroughfare, of some remote and pleasant memory of morning and the market-place.

It was a week afterward, that, as Eve and her mother loitered over luncheon, the door again softly opened, and they saw Luigi standing erect on the threshold, and holding with both hands above the brightly bronzed face a tall, slender, white jar of ancient and exquisite shape, carefully painted, and having a glass suspended within, lest any water it might receive should penetrate the porous plaster.

He did not look at Eve, but marched to her mother, and deposited it upon the floor at her feet.

"For the Signora's lilies," said he.

And remembering the silver pieces of the week before, and fearing lest she should really grieve him, the Signora perforce accepted it with admiring words; while Eve ran to fill it from the garden, into which abode of bliss—as gardens always are—the long casement of the music-room opened. Luigi hesitated, his hand upon the door, wistful wishes in his face; then he cast a smiling, deprecating glance at the mother, lightly crossed the floor, was over the sill, and stood beside Eve in the walk.

To right and left the long, straight stems rose in rank, and bore their floral crown of listening lilies, calm, majestic, pure, and only stirring now and then when the wind shook a waft of gold-dust down the shining leaf, or rifled the inmost heart of its delicious wealth of odor; on either side of the path the snowy bloom lay like a fallen cloud.

"It is a company of angels," said Luigi, brokenly, "a cloud of seraphs with their gold harps! If they should sing," hazarded he, "it would be the song the Signorina gave me,—alas, it is long since!"

"It is a week," said she, laughing and lingering.

"Eve!" came a warning voice.

"That is the Signorina's name?" questioned Luigi, as he bent to help her cut the stems.

"Eve,—yes, they call me so."

"Certainly I had not thought it," he repeated to himself.

"Why, what did you suppose it was?" she heedlessly asked.

"*Luigia!*" said he. And his low, rapt tone was indescribably simple, sweet, and intense.

Eve did not know what the boy himself was called.

"I wish it were," said she. "That is a pleasant sound."

And rising with her armful, she went in and heaped the jar with honor, while Luigi, pleased and proud, lifted it to the level of the black-walnut bracket.

"Signora, behold what is beautiful!" said he, stepping back.

The Signora looked at the lilies, but Luigi looked at Eve.

They had lunched. Eve went into the other room to her exercises. Her mother poured out a glass of wine for the unbidden guest. He repulsed it with an angry eye and a disdainful gesture. But then there rose the sound of Eve's voice just beyond;—while he stayed, he could listen. With sudden change from frown to smile, he stepped forward and took the plate.

"To the Signora's health," said he, with a courtesy that sat well on the supple shape and the dark beauty of the boy, whose homely garb, whose poverty, and whose profession seemed only the disguise of some young prince,—and sipped the wine, and broke the fine, white bread, while his cheek was scarlet with delight at recurrence of the familiar sounds, even though in such simple phrase.

"That is a proud boy," said Eve's mother, when he had gone, and she paused a moment to see how Eve went on. "He urges no one."

"Italy is full of its troubles, *mia madre*. He is the exile of a noble family,—no other beggar would be so haughty," looked up and answered Eve, laughing between her bars. "Mamma, what different beings different meridians make!" she exclaimed, dropping her music. "Is he so sweet and lofty and fiery because he has lived in the shadow of old temples,—because, if he stumbled over a pebble in the street, it was the marble fragment of a goddess,—because the clay of which he is made has so many times been moulded into heroes?"

"Are there no further fancies with which you can invest an image-vender?"

"But he is unique. Did you ever see any one like him? Daily beauty has made him beautiful. Is that what the Doctor means, when he says a Corinthian pillar in the market-place would educate a generation better than a pulpit would?"

"They have both in Rome," said her mother, with meaning.

"And, in spite of them, perhaps our hero cannot spell! Yet he is more accomplished than we, mamma. He speaks Italian beautifully," said she, with *espièglerie*.

"But hardly Tuscan."

"Silver speech for all that. I have reached the end of my idioms, though. I always said school was good for something, if one could only find it out," she archly cried, her little fingers running in arpeggios up the keys. "To think he understood them so! Then Dante's women would."

"Heaven forbid!"

"How his face glows at them,—like a light behind a mask! It is quite the opera, when he comes. I will sing to him an aria, and then it will make a scene."

"You are a madcap. What do you want a scene for?"

"Spice. When my voice fills his handsome eyes with tears, he makes me an artist; when he turns upon you in that sudden, ardent air, he brings a sting of foreign fire into this quiet summer noon."

"Amuse yourself sparingly with other people's emotions, Eve."

"Especially when they are suave as olive-oil, pungent as cherry-cordial, and ready to blaze with a spark, you know. Ah, it is all as interesting to me as when the little sweep last year looked out from the chimney-top and made the whole sky brim over with his wild music."

Here a clock chimed silverly from below.

"There is the half-hour striking, and you have lost all this time," said the caressing mother, her fingers lost in the bright locks she lifted.

"Never mind, mother mine," said she, turning in elfish mood to brush her lips across the frustrated fingers. "Art is long, if time is fleeting," she sang to the measure of her *Non più mesta*, beginning again to shower its diamonds about till all the air seemed bright with her young and sparkling voice.

Summer days are never too long for the fortunes of health and happiness, and at the sunset following this same morning Eve leaned from the casement, watching the retiring rays as if she fain would pursue. A tender after-glow impurpled all the heaven like a remembered passion, and bathed field and fallow in its bloom. It gave to her a kind of aureole, as if her beauty shed a lustre round her. The window where she leaned was separated from the street only by a narrow inclosure, where grew a single sumach, whose stem went straight and bare to the eaves, and there branched out, like the picture of a palm-tree, in tossing plumes. Blossoming honeysuckles wreathed this stem and sweetened every breath.

A figure came sauntering down the street, an upright and pliant form, laden with green boughs. It was Luigi, with whom it had been a holiday, and who, roaming in the woods, had come across a wild stock on whose rude flavor the kindly freak of some wayfarer had grafted that of pulpy wax-heart cherries, tart ruddiness and sugared snow. Pausing before Eve, he gazed at her lingeringly, then sprang half-way up the adjacent door-steps, and proffered her his fragrant freight. Eve deliberated for a moment, but the fruit was tempting, the act would be kind. As he stood there, he wore a certain humility, and yet a certain assurance,—the lover's complicate timidity, that seems to say he will defend her against all the world, for there is nothing in the world he fears except herself. Eve bent and broke a little spray of the nearest branch.

"They are all for you," pleaded he,—"all."

"I have enough," said Eve.

"I brought them for the Signorina from the wood. Behold! the tints are hers. The cream upon Madonna's shoulder,—here; the soft red flame upon her cheek is there."

"Ah! I thank you," said Eve. "Good night."

"*Scusi*,—I beg that the Signorina take them."

"No, no," answered Eve, obliged to speak, and, hanging on her foot, half turned away, a moment before flight; "why should I rob you so?"

"It is not take,—but give! Why? Only that to me you are so kind. *O quanta bontà*! You speak the speech I love. You sing its songs. I was a wanderer. *Io era solo*. Alone and sad. But since I heard your voice, I am at home again, and life is sweet!"

And suddenly and dexterously he flung the boughs past her in at the open window, laughed at his success till the teeth flashed again in his dusky face, kissed both his hands and ran down the steps, singing in a ringing recitative something where the *bella bellas* echoed and reëchoed each other through the evening as far as they could be heard at all.

Eve smiled to herself, gathered up the scattered boughs, and went into the lighted room behind, where her gay companions clustered, appearing at the door thus laden, and with a blush upon her brow.

"Mamma," said she, her lovely head bent on one side and ringed with gloss beneath the burner, "the fruit is fresh, whether you call it cherry or *ciriegia*." And straightway planting herself at her mother's feet, taper fingers twinkled among shadowy leaves till the boughs were bare of their juicy burden, and they all made merry together upon the spoils of Luigi.

July was following June in sunshine down the slope of the year, and Eve, pursuing her pleasures, might almost have forgotten that an image-boy existed, had Luigi allowed her to forget. But he was omnipresent as a gnat.

As she walked from church on the next Sunday afternoon alone, gazing at her shadow by the way, she started to see another shadow fall beside it. In spite of his festal midsummer attire of white linen, a sidelong glance assured her that it was Luigi; yet she did not raise her eyes. He continued by her, in silence, several steps.

"Signorina Eve," said he then, "I went that I might worship with you."

But Eve had no reply.

"My prayer mounted with yours,—may he forgive, *il padre mio*," said Luigi. "*Ebbene!* It is not lovely there. It is cold. Your heaven would be a dreary place, perhaps. Come rather to mine!" For they approached a little chapel, the crystallization in stone of a devout fancy, and through the open doors rolling organ, purple incense, and softened light invited entrance. "It is the holy vespers," said the boy. "*Ciascuno alia sua volta.* The Signorina enters,—*forse?*"

"Not to-day," answered Eve, gently.

"Kneel we not," then faltered he, "before one shrine,—although," and he grew angry with his hesitation, "at different gates?"

"Ah, certainly," said Eve. "But now I must go home."

"The Signorina refuses to come with me, then!" he exclaimed, springing forward so that he opposed her progress. "Her foot is too holy! she herself has said it. Her eyes are too lofty,—*gli occhi azzurri!*! It is true; stood she there, who would look at the blessed saints? Ah! you have a fair face, but it is—*traditrice*!"

And as he confronted her, with his clenched hands slightly raised and advanced from his side, the lithe figure drawn back, the swarthy cheek, the eager eyes, aglow, and made more vivid by his spotless attire, Eve bethought herself that a scene in public had fewer charms than one in private, and, casting about for escape, quietly stepped across the street. For an instant Luigi gazed after her like one thunderstruck; then he dashed into the vestibule and was lost in its shadows.

It was at midnight that Eve's mother, rising to close an open window, caught sight of an outline in the obscurity, and discerned Luigi leaning on the railing below, with one arm supporting his upturned face. "Ah, the sad day! the sad day!" he was sighing in his native speech. "Pardon, pardon, Signorina! Alas! I was beside myself!"

And on the next twilight Eve stood at the gate, her arms and hands full of a flush of rosy wild azaleas from the swamps, bounty that had been silently laid upon her by a fast and fleeting shadow. She doubted for a moment, then dropped them where she stood. But a tint as deep as theirs was broken by the arch and dimpling smile that flickered round her mouth as she went in, laughing because this devotion was so strange, and blushing because it was so genuine. "Mamma," said she, her eyes cast down, her head askant like a shy bird's, "I am afraid I have a lover!" And then to think of it the child grew sad. It pained her to grieve him with the beautiful pink blossoms she had dropped, and which

she knew he would return to find; but better trivial sting than lasting ache, she had heard. And perhaps in his tropical nature the passion would be brief as the pain.

The broad, bright river flowing past the town by summer noon or night was never left unflecked with sails. And of all who loved its swinging bridge, its stately shores, its breezy expanses, none sought them more frequently than Eve.

She had gone out one day with her companions—who, beside her, seemed like the moss that clusters on a rose-bud—to watch the shoal in the weir as the treacherous ebb forsook it. It was a favorite diversion of Eve's,—for she always felt as if she were Scheherazade looking into the pools of her fancy, and viewing the submerged city with its princes and its populace transformed to fish, when, having entered the heart-shaped inclosure, she leaned over the boat-side and noted the twin tides of life whose facile and luminous career followed all the outline of the weir. For the mackerel, swimming in at the two eddies of the mouth, struck straight across in transverse courses till they met the barrier on either side, and then each slowly felt the way along to the end of the lobe, where, instead of escaping, they struck freely across again, and thus pursued their round in everlasting interchase of lustre,—through the darkly transparent surface each current glancing on its swift and silent way, an arrow of emerald and silver. Curving, racing, rippling with tints, they circled, till, warned by some subtile instinct that the river was betraying them, fresh fear swept faster and faster their lines of light, the rich dyes deepened in the splendid scales, and some huddled into herds, and some, more frantic than the rest, leaped from the water in shining streaks, and darted away like stars into outer safety. There the sail-boat already had preceded them, and the master of the weir, having taken its place, from the dip-net was loading his dory with massive fare of frosted silver and fusing jewel. As Eve and her friends lingered yet a moment there, watching the picturesque figure splashing barelegged in the shallow water, one of the droll little craft known as Joppa-chaises came up beside them, a fulvous face appeared at its helm, a tawny hand was extended, and they left Luigi bargaining for fish, and stringing these simulations of massed turquoise and scale-ruby at a penny apiece.

What little wind there was that day blew from the southeast, and sheathed the brightness of the noonday sky in a soft veil of haze; and having made this pretty sight their own, Eve's party spread their sail for tacking to and fro, meaning to reach the sea. This, for some hidden reason, the wind refused to let them do, and when it found them obstinate brought an accomplice upon the scene, and they suddenly surprised themselves rocking this side the bar, and caught in the vapory fringes of a dark sea-turn, that, creeping round about, had soon so wrapped and folded them that they could scarcely see the pennon drooping at their mast-head. This done, the wind fell altogether, and they lay there a part of the great bank of mist that all day brooded above the bar. Everywhere around them the gray cloud hung and curled and curdled; it was impossible to see an oar's-length on either side; their very faces were unfamiliar, and seemed to be looking like the faces of spirits from a different atmosphere; their little boat was the whole world, and beyond it was only void. Now and then an idle puff parted the bank to right and left, their sail flapped impatiently, and in the sudden space they saw the barge that dashed along with the great white seine-boat heaped high with nets towering in its midst, the oars of the six red-shirted rowers flashing in the sun as it cut the channel and rushed by to join the fishing-fleet outside,—or they caught a glimpse of some little gunning-float, covered with wisps of hay and carrying its single occupant couched *perdu* along its length,—or, while they lunched and trifled and jested, Eve with her crumbs tolled about them the dwellers in the depths, and in the falling flake of sunshine laughed to see a stately aldermanic flounder, that came paddling after a chicken-bone, put to rout by a satanic sculpin, whereat an eel swiftly snaked the prize away, and the frost-fish, collecting at a chance of civil war, mingled in the *mêlée*, tooth and nail, or rather fin and tail. Then the vapors would darken round them again, till, with the stray rays caught and refracted in their fleece, it seemed like living in an opal full of cloudy color and fire. Far off they heard the great ground-swell of the surf upon the beach, or there came the dull report of the sportsmen in the marsh, or they exchanged first a laugh and then a yawn with some other unseen party becalmed in

the fog and drifting with the currents; and all day long, on this side and on that, the cloud rang with near and distant music, as if Ariel and his sprites had lost their way in it, the tinkling of a mandolin, the singing of a clear, rich voice that had the tenor's golden strain, and yet, in floating through the mist, was sweet and sighing as a flute. The melody and the undistinguished words it bore upon its wings, delicious tune and passionate meaning, seemed the speech of another planet, an orb of song, the delicate sound lost when at sunset the threaded mist broke up and streamed away in fire, but coming again, as if they were haunted by the viewless voices of the air, when star-beam and haze tangled together at last in the dusk of summer night and found them still rocking on the swell, vainly whistling for the wind, and slowly tiding up with the flood.

It was one of those days so long in the experience, but so charming to remember. Eve, with her wilful, fearless ways, her quips and joyousness, had been the life and the delight of it; now, chilled and weary, she hailed the sight of the lamps that seemed to be hung out along the shore to light them home: for their boatmen were inexperienced, and, though wind failed them, had not dared before to lift the oars, ignorant as they were of their precise whereabouts, and even now made no progress like that of the unseen voice still hovering around them. There had been a season of low tides, and when, to save the weary work of rowing a heavy sail-boat farther, it was decided to make the shore, they were hindered by a length of shallow water and weedy flat, through which the ladies of the party must consent to be carried. A late weird moon was rising down behind the light-houses, all red and angry in the mist still brooding over the horizon, the boat lay in the deep shade it cast, the river beyond was breaking into light, reach after reach, like a blossom into bloom. Two of her friends had already been taken to the bank; Eve stood in the bow, awaiting her bearers, and watching the distant bays of the stream, each one of which seemed just on the verge of opening into an impossible midnight glory. She heard the plash of feet in the water, but did not heed it other than to fold her cloak more conveniently about her, her eye caught the contour of a vague approaching form, and then shadowy arms were reaching up to encircle her. She was bending, and just yielding herself to the clasp, when the hearty voice of her bearers sounded at hand, bidding her be of good cheer; the adumbration shrank back into the gloom, and, before she recovered from her start, firm arms had borne her to firm land.

"Well, Eve," said one of her awaiting friends, "is the earth going up and down with you? As for me, my head swims like a buoy. I feel as if I had waltzed all day."

"Nympholeptic, then," said Eve,—

> "'When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave of the sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that.'"

"I thought they threw out the anchor down there," said the other. "Are they tying her up for the night, too? How long it takes them! Oh, for an inquisition and a rack,—I am so cramped! Eve, here, is extinguished. What a day it has been!"

> "'Oh, sweet the flight, at dead of night,
> When up the immeasurable height
> The thin cloud wanders with the breeze
> That shakes the splendor from the star,
> That stoops and crisps the darkling seas,
> And drives the daring keel afar
> Where loneliness and silence are!
> To cleave the crested wave, and mark
> Drowned in its depth the shattered spark,
> On airy swells to soar, and rise

Where nothing but the foam-bell flies,
O'er freest tracts of wild delight,
Oh, sweet the flight at dead of night!'"

sang Eve. "Ah, there they are! I am so tired that I could fall asleep here, if there were but a reed to lean against!"

"*Appoggiatevi a me*" sighed a murmurous voice in her ear, with musical monotone.

A little shiver ran over Eve, but no soul saw it; in an instant she knew the sound that had all day haunted the sea-turn; yet she could neither smile nor be angry at Luigi's simplicity; with a peremptory motion of her hand, she only waved him away, and fortified herself among her companions, who, thoroughly awakened, made the night ring as they wended along. They rallied Eve, then grew vexed that she refused the sport, and kept silence awhile, only to break it with gayer laughter, elate with life while half the world was stretched in white repose. At length they paused to rest in the lee of a cottage that seemed more like a hulk drawn up on shore than any house, but matted from ground to chimney in a smother of woodbine.

"A picturesque place," said one of the chevaliers.

"And a picturesque body lives in it," replied another. "The beauty of the fisher-maidens. I have seen her out upon the flats at low tide digging for clams, barefooted, the short petticoats fluttering, a handkerchief across her ears,—and outline could do no more."

"I have seen her, too," said Eve. "Though she lives in the belt of sunburn, she is white as snow, —milk-white, with hazel eyes. She has hair like Sordello's Elys. She is a girl that dreams. Let us serenade her till she sees visions."

And Eve's voice went warbling lightly up, till the others joined, as if the oriole in his hanging nest not far away had stirred to sing out the seasons of the dark.

"The hours that bear thy beauty prize
Star after star sinks numbering,—
The laden wind at thy lattice sighs
To find thee slumbering, slumbering!

"Ah, wantonly why waste these hours
That love would fain be borrowing?
Soon youth and joy must fall like flowers,
And leave thee sorrowing, sorrowing!

"Ye fleeting hours, ye sacred skies,
Sweet airs around her hovering,
Oh, open me the envied eyes
Your spells are covering, covering!

"Or only, while the dew's soft showers
Shake slowly into glistening,
Let her, O magic midnight hours,
In dreams be listening, listening!"

And their voices blended so together as they sang, and the plunge of the sea came on the east-wind in such chiming chord, that they never heeded the old mandolin whose strings in humble remoteness Luigi struck to their tune. But mingling the sound of the sea and the sound of the strings in her memory, it seemed to Eve that Luigi was fast becoming the undertone of her life.

But Luigi was not to be abashed. Faint heart never won fair lady, he said to himself, in some answering apophthegm. And thereat he summoned his reserves.

At noon of the next day, Eve, having run down-stairs into the room where her mother sat, stood before her during the inspection of the attire she had proposed as possible for an approaching masquerade some weeks hence. She wore a white robe of classic make, and over its trailing folds her bright hair, all unbound from the heavy braids, streamed in a thousand ripples of scattered lustre, the brown breaking into gold, the gloss lurking in tremulous jacinth shadows, tresses like a cascade of ravelled light falling to her feet, shrouding her in a long and luminous veil,—such "sweet shaken hair" as was never seen since Spenser and Ariosto put their heads together.

"*Come sta*?" said some one in the doorway. And there stood Luigi, having deposited his tray of images on the steps, holding up a long string of birds'-eggs blown, tiny varicolored globes plundered from the thrushes, bobolinks, blue-jays, and cedar-birds, and trembling upon the thread as if their concrete melody quivered to open into tune.

For an indignant instant Eve felt her seclusion unwarrantably violated; she turned upon the invader with her blushes, and the venturesome Luigi blenched before the gaze. Still, though he retreated, a part of him remained: a slender brown hand, that stretched back in relief against the white door-post, yet suspended the pretty rosary; and there it caught Eve's eye.

Now it was Euterpe that Eve was to represent at the masquerade; and what ornament so fit and fanciful as this amulet of spring-time, whose charm commanded all that hour of freshness, fragrance, and dew, when the burdened heart of the dawn bubbles over with music? Yet the enticement was brief. Eve looked and longed, and then hurriedly turned her back upon the tempting treasure, her two hands thrusting it off. "Behind me, Satan!" cried she, tossing a laugh at her mother; and Paula, the stately servant who had followed her down, signified to Luigi that the door awaited his movements.

Then the hand quietly withdrew, and his footstep was heard upon the threshold. It was arrested by a sound: Eve stood in the doorway, gathering her locks in one hand, and blushing and smiling upon him like sunshine, whether she would or no.

"You are very kind," said she, hesitating, and fluttering out the broad, snowy love-ribbon that was to ornament her lute, "but, if you please,—indeed"—

"Indeed, the Signorina cares not for such bawbles," said Luigi, sadly, covering her with his gaze. Then he turned, mounted his tray again, and went slowly down the street, forgetting to cry his wares.

Perhaps, after this, Luigi felt that his situation was desperate; perhaps despair made him bold, —for, having already spoiled Eve's pleasure for the day, that same evening found him in her mother's garden, half hidden in the grape-vines, and watching the movements in the lighted room opposite, through the long window, whose curtain was seldom dropped.

It was a gay old town in those days, kind to its lads and lasses, and if the streets were grass-grown, it seemed only that so they might give softer footing to the young feet that trod them. Almost every night there was a festival at one house or another, and this evening the rendezvous was with Eve. The guests gathered and dallied, the dancers floated round the room, the lovers uttered their weighty trifles in such seclusion or shadow as they could secure, the voices melted in happy unison. Eve, with snowy shoulders and faultless arms escaping from the ruffle of her rosy gauzes, where skirt over skirt, like clinging petals, made her seem the dryad of a wild rose-tree just rising and looking from her blushing cup, Eve flitted to and fro among them, and, all the time, Luigi's gaze brooded over the scene. Sometimes her shadow fell in the lighted space of turf, and then Luigi went and laid his cheek upon it; it passed, and he returned once more to his hiding-place, and the dark, motionless countenance, with its wandering, glittering eyes, appeared to hang upon the dense leafage that sheltered all the rest of him like a vizard in whose cavities glowworms had gathered. And more than once, in passing, Eve delayed a moment, and almost caught that gaze; she was sensible of his presence there, felt it, as she might have felt an apparition, as if the eyes were those of a basilisk and she were fascinated to look and look again, till filled with a strange fear and unrest. It grew late; by-

and-by, before they separated, Eve sang. It would have been impossible for her to say why she chose a luscious little Italian air, one that many a time at home, perhaps, Luigi had heard some midnight lover sing. Through it, as he listened now, he could fancy the fountain's fall, the rustle of the bough, the half-checked gurgle of the nightingale, upon the scented waft almost the slow down-floating of the scattered corolla of the full-blown flower. The tears sparkled over his face, first of delight, and then of anger. Something was wanting in the song,—he missed the passionate utterance of the lover standing by the gate and pouring his soul in his singing.

Suddenly the room was startled by the ring of a voice from the garden, a voice that outbroke sweet and strong, that snatched the measure from Eve's lips, flung a fervor into its flow, a depth into its burden, and carried it on with impetuous fire, lingering with tenderness here, swift with ardor there, till all hearts bounded in quicker palpitation when the air again was still. For deep feeling has a potency of its own, and all that careless group felt as if some deific cloud had passed by.

As for Eve, what coquetry there was in her nature was but the innocent coruscation of happy spirits, the desire to see her power, the necessity of being dear to all she touched. Far from pleasant was this vehemence of devotion; the approach of it oppressed her; she comprehended Luigi as a creature of another species, another race, than herself; she shrank before him now with a kind of horror. That night in a nervous excitation she did not close an eye, and in the morning she was wan as a flower after rain.

This state of things found at least one observer, a personage of no less authority in household matters than Paula, the tall and stately woman of Nubian lineage who had been the nurse of Eve, and who every morning now stood behind her chair at breakfast, familiarly joining in and gathering what she chose of the conversation. Erect as a palm-tree, slender, queenly, with her thin and clearly cut features, and her head like that of some Circassian carved in black marble, she had a kinship of picturesqueness with Luigi, and could meet him more nearly on his own ground than another, for her voice was as sweet as his, and he was only less dark than she. Breakfast over, she took her way into the garden, set open the gate, and busied herself pinching the fresh shoots of the grape-vine, too luxuriant in leaves. She did not wait long before Luigi came up the side-street, his tray upon his head, his gait less elastic than beseemed the fresh, fragrant morning. Paula stepped forward and gave him pause, with a gesture.

"Sir!" said she, commandingly.

Luigi looked up at her inquiringly. Then a pleasant expectation overshot his gloomy face; he smiled, and his teeth glittered, and his eyes. Instantly he unslung his tray and set it upon the level gate-post.

"Sir," said Paula, "do you come here often?"

"*Tutti i giorni*," answered Luigi, scarcely considering her worth wasting his sparse and precious English upon.

"You come here often," said Paula. "Will you come here no more?"

Luigi opened his eyes in amaze.

"You will come here no more," said Paula.

"*Chi lo*,—who wishes it?" stammered Luigi.

"My mistress," answered Paula, proudly, as if to be her servant were more than enough distinction, and to mention her name were sovereign.

"Who commands?" he demanded, imperatively.

"Still my mistress."

"She said—Tell me that!"

"She said, 'Paula, if the boy disturbs us further, we must take measures.'"

"The Signorina?"

"Her mother."

"Not the Signorina, then!" And Luigi's gloomy face grew radiant.

"She and her mother are one," replied Paula.

Luigi was silent for a moment. One could see the shadows falling over him. Then he said, softly, —

"My Paula, you will befriend me?"

Paula bridled at the address; arrogant in family-place, she would have assured him plainly that she was none of his, to begin with, had he been an atom less disconsolate.

"Never more than now!" said she, loftily.

Luigi did not understand her; her tone was kind, but there was a "never" in her words.

"I should be the most a friend," said Paula, unbending, "in urging you to forget us."

"Ah, never!"

"Let me say. Can you read?"

"Some things," replied Luigi quickly, his brow brightening.

"Can you write?"

"It may be. Alas! I have not tried."

"You see."

There was no appeal from Paula's dictatorial demeanor.

"*Dio*! I am unfit! Ah, Jesu, I am unfit! But if she cared not—if I learned"—and he paused, striving now for the purest, most intelligible speech, while his face beamed with his smiling hope.

"Listen," interposed Paula, with the dignity of the headsman. "You have no truer friend than me at this moment, as some day you will discover. Come, now, will you do me a favor?"

"*Di tutto cuore*!"

"Then leave us to ourselves."

"Not possible!" cried Luigi, stung with disappointment.

"What would you do, then? Would you wear her life out? Would you keep her in a terror? She has said to me that she must go away. It suffocates one to be pursued in this manner. You are not pleasant to her. Hark. She dislikes you!" And Paula bent toward him with uplifted finger, and, having delivered her stroke, after watching its effect a moment, reared herself and adjusted her gay turban with internal satisfaction.

Luigi cast his eyes slowly about him; they fell on the smooth grass-plats rising with webs of shaking sparkle, the opening flowers half-bowed beneath the weight of the shining spheres they held, the brilliant garden bathed in dew, the waving boughs tossing off light spray on every ravaging gust, the far fair sky bending over all. Then he hid his face against the great gate-post, murmuring only in a dry and broken sob,—

"*C' è sole*?"

Paula herself was touched. She put her hand on his shoulder.

"It is a silly thing," said she. "Do not take it so to heart. Put it out of sight. There is many a pretty tambourine-tosser to smile upon you, I'll warrant!"

But Luigi vouchsafed no response.

"Come," said she, "pluck up your courage. You will soon be better of it."

"*Non sarò meglio*!" answered Luigi. "I shall never be better."

He lifted his head and looked at her where she stood in the light, black, but comely, transfixing her on the burning glances of his bold eyes. "In your need," said he, "may you find just such friend as I have found!" The words were of his native language, but the malediction was universal. Paula half shivered, and fingered the amulet that her princely Nubian ancestor had fingered before her, while he spoke. Then he bowed his head to its burden, fastened the straps, and went bent and stooping upon his way, repeating sadly to himself, "And does the sun shine?"

A week passed. Part of another. Eve saw no more of Luigi, but was yet all the time uncomfortably conscious of his espionage. He was hardly a living being to her, but, as soon as night

fell, the soft starry nights now in which there was no moon, she felt him like a darker film of spirit haunting the shadow. In the daytime, sunshine reassured her, and she remained almost at peace.

She was sitting one warm afternoon at the open window up-stairs, looking over a box of airy trifles, flowers and bows and laces, searching for a parcel of sheer white love-ribbon, a slip of woven hoarfrost that was not to be found. There was none like it to be procured; this was the night of the little masquerade; it was indispensable; and immediately she proceeded to raise the house. In answer to her descriptive inquiry, Paula, who every noon nestled as near the sun as possible, responded in a high key from the attic a descriptive negative; neither had her mother, waking from a *siesta* in the garden, seen any white gauze folderols. The three voices made the air well acquainted with the affair.

However, Eve was not to be baffled; she remembered distinctly having had the love-ribbon in her hands on the day she first proposed the dress; it must be found, and she sat down again at the open casement, intrenched behind twenty boxes of like treasure, in any one of which the thing might have hidden itself away, while her mother came up and established herself with a fan at the other window, and Paula, descending from her perch, rummaged the neighboring dressing-room.

On the opposite side of the street stretched a long strip of shaven turf, known as the Parade, yet seldom used for anything but summer-evening strolls, and below its velvet terraces, in a green dimple, lay a pool, borrowing all manner of umberous stains from the shore, and yet in its very heart contriving to reflect a part of heaven. Languishing elm-trees lined its edge, and beneath the boughs, whose heavily drooping masses seemed like the grapes of Eshcol, rude benches offered rest to the weary.

On one of these benches now sat a person profoundly occupied in carving something into its seat. If he could easily have heard the voices in the dwelling opposite, he had not once glanced up. Now and then he paused and leaned his head upon the arm that lay along the rail, then again he pursued his task. Once, when his progress, perhaps, had exceeded expectation, or the striking of a clock beneath some distant spire announced no need of haste, he laid down his knife, left his occupation, and came to lean against the low fence beneath Eve's window and gaze daringly up. Eve did not see him. Her mother did, and held her breath lest Eve should turn that way, and, having directed Eve's glance elsewhere, shook her fan at the bold boy. But there was no insolence in Luigi's gaze. He seemed merely wishing that his work should be marked; and, having attracted fit attention, he returned quietly to the bench and the carving once more.

At length the sun hung high over the west, preparing to fall into his hidden resting-place that colored all the cloudless heaven with its mounting tinge. Luigi rose and inspected his work. Then again he crossed the street and stood below Eve's window. It was a long time that he leaned with his arms folded on the bar of the low paling. Perhaps he meant that she should look at him. She had closed the last of her receptacles, and, dismissing the matter, for want of better employment, her scissors were tinkering upon a tiny hand-glass with a setting thickly crusted in crystals, a trifle that one clear day a sailor diving from her father's ship had found upon the bottom of the sea,—a very mermaid's glass dropped in some shallow place for Eve herself, a glass that had reflected the rushing of the storm, the sliding of the keel above, the face of many a drowning mariner. Careless of all that, at the moment, she held it up now to the light to see if further furbishing could brighten it, and as she did so was hastily checked. She had caught sight of a dark face just framed and mirrored, the sad eyes raised and resting on her own, luminous no more, but heavy, and longing, and dull with a weight of woe. At the same moment, Paula, who had by no means abandoned the lost love-ribbon, cried from within,—

"Well, Miss, the lutestring has been spirited away, and no less. I've searched the house through, and nobody has it."

"*Qualcheduno l' ha*," breathed a sweet, melancholy tone from below; and they turned and saw it in Luigi's hands, the frosty film of gossamer. He held it up a moment, pressed it to his lips, folded it again into his breast; and if it was plain that somebody had it, it was plainer still that somebody

meant to keep it. And then, as if twin stars were bending over him out of the bluest deeps of heaven, Luigi kept Eve's eyes awhile suspended on his despairing gaze, and without other word or gesture turned and went away.

Many days afterward, when it was certain that the little foreign image-vender had indeed departed, Eve stole over to the bench beneath the lofty arches of the elm-tree, all checkered with flickering sunlight, and endeavored to read the sentence carved thereon. It was at first undecipherable, and then, the text conquered, not easy for her to comprehend. But when she had made it hers, she rose, bathed with blushes, and stole away home again, feeling only as if Luigi had laid a chain upon her heart.

Years have fled. The little legend yet remains cut deep into the wood, though he returns no more, and though, since then, her

> "Part in all the pomp that fills
> The circuit of the summer hills
> Is that her grave is green."

Rain and snow have not effaced its *intaglio*, nor summer's dust, nor winter's wind; and if you ever pass it, you yet may read,—

> AMOR QUE A NULLO
> AMATO
> AMAR PERDONA.

COMMUNICATION

Whether virtue can be taught is a question over which Plato lingers long. And it is a curious illustration of the different eyes with which different men read, that some students of Plato are confident he answers the question in the affirmative, while others are equally sure that he gives it an unqualified negative. "Plato," says Schwegler, "holds fast to the opinion that virtue is science, and therefore to be imparted by instruction." "We are told," says Burgess, one of Bohn's translators, "that, as virtue is not a science, it cannot, like a science, be made a subject of teaching." Professor Blackie, again, an open-minded and eloquent scholar, cannot doubt that virtue may be verbally imparted, nor, therefore, that the great Athenian thinker so believed and affirmed.

What is the voice of common sense and the teaching of history touching this matter? Can a liberal and lofty nature be included in words, and so passed over to another? Elevation of character, nobility of spirit, wealth of soul,—is any method known, or probably ever to be known, among men, whereby these can be got into a text-book, and then out of the text-book into a bosom wherein they had no dwelling before? Alas, is not the story of the world too full of cases in which the combined eloquence of verbal instruction, vital influence, and lustrous example, aided even by all the inspirations of the most majestic and moving presence, have failed utterly to shape the character of disciples? Did Alcibiades profit greatly by the conversation of Socrates? Was Judas extremely ennobled by the companionship of Jesus? Was it to any considerable purpose that the pure-minded, earnest, affluent Cicero strewed the seeds of Stoic culture upon the wayside nature of his son? Did Faustina learn much from Antoninus Pius, or Commodus from Marcus Aurelius?

I think we must assume it as the judgment of common sense that there neither is nor is likely to be any educational mortar wherein a fool may be so brayed that he shall come forth a wise man. The broad, unequivocal sentence of history seems to be that whoever is not noble by nature will hardly be rendered so by art. Education can do much; it can foster nobilities, it can discourage vices; but literal conveyance of lofty qualities, can it effect that? Can it create opulence of soul in a sterile nature? Can it cause a thin soil to do the work of a deep one? We have seen harsh natures mellowed, violent natures chastened, rough ones refined; but who has seen an essentially mean nature made large-hearted, self-forgetful, fertile of grandest faiths and greatest deeds? Who has beheld a Thersites transformed into an Achilles? Who a Shylock, Iago, or Regan changed into an Antonio, Othello, or Cordelia, or a Simon Magus into a Paul? What virtue of nature is in a man culture may bring out; but to put nature into any man surpasses her competence.

Nay, it would even seem that in some cases the finest openings and invitations for what is best in man must operate inversely, and elicit only what is worst in him. Every profoundest truth, when uttered with fresh power in history, polarizes men, accumulating atheism at one pole, while collecting faith and resolve at the other. As the sun bleaches some surfaces into whiteness, but tans and blackens others, so the sweet shining of Truth illumines some countenances with belief, but some it darkens into a scowl of hate and denial. The American Revolution gave us George Washington; but it gave us also Benedict Arnold. One and the same great spiritual emergency in Europe produced Luther's Protestantism and Loyola's Jesuitism. Our national crisis has converted General Butler; what has it done for Vallandigham?

It were easy to show that the deepest intelligence of the world concurs with common sense in this judgment. Its declaration ever is, in effect, that, though Paul plant and Apollos water, yet fruit can come only out of divine and infinite Nature,—only, that is, out of the native, incommunicable resources of the soul. "No man can come to me," said Jesus, "except the Father draw him." "To him that hath shall be given." The frequent formula, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," is a confession that no power of speech, no wisdom of instruction, can command results. The grandest teacher, like the humblest, can but utter his word, sure that the wealthy and prepared spirits will

receive it, and equally sure that shallow, sterile, and inane natures will either not receive it at all, or do so to extremely little purpose.

And such, as I read, is the judgment of Plato; though, ever disposed to explore the remote possibilities of education, he discusses the subject in a tentative spirit, as if vaguely hoping that more might, through some discovery in method, be accomplished by means of doctrine. But in the "Republic" his permanent persuasion is shown. He there bases his whole scheme of polity, as Goethe in the second part of "Wilhelm Meister" bases his scheme of education, upon a primary inspection of natures, in which it is assumed that culture must begin by humbly accepting the work of Nature, forswearing all attempt to add one jot or tittle to the native virtue of any human spirit.

It is always, however, less important for us to know what another thinks upon any high matter than to know what is our own deepest and inevitable thought concerning it; for, as the man himself thinketh, not as another thinketh for him, so is he: his own thoughts are forces and engines in his nature; those of any other are at best but candidates for these profound effects. I propose, therefore, that we throw open the whole question of man's benefit to man by means of words. Let us inquire—if possible, with somewhat of courage and vigor—what are the limits and what the laws of instructive communication.

And our first discovery will be that such communication has adamantine limitations. The off-hand impression of most persons would probably be that we are able to make literal conveyance of our thought. But, in truth, one could as soon convey the life out of his veins into the veins of another as transfer from his own mind to that of another any belief, thought, or perception whatsoever.

Words are simply the signs, they are not the vehicles, of thought. Like all signs, they convey nothing, but only suggest. Like all signs, they are intelligible to none but the initiated. One man, having a certain mental experience, hoists, as it were, a signal, like ships at sea, whereby he would make suggestion of it to another; and if in the mental experience of that other be somewhat akin to this, which, by virtue of that kindred, can interpret its symbol, then only, and to the extent of such interpretation, does communication occur. But the mental experience itself, the thought itself, does not pass; it only makes the sign.

If, for example, I utter the word *God*, it conveys nothing out of my mind into the mind of you, the reader; it simply appeals to your conception of divinity. If I attempt to explain, then every word of the explanation must be subject to the same conditions; not one syllable of it can do more than merely appeal to somewhat already in your mind. For instance, suppose I say, *God is love*; what then is done? The appeal is shifted to another sign; that is all. What my own soul, fed from the vital resources and incited by the vital relationships of my life, has learned of love, that my thought may connect with the word; but of all this nothing passes when it is uttered; and the sound, arriving at your ear, can do no more than invite you to summon and bring before the eye of your consciousness that which your own soul, out of its divine depths and through the instruction of vital relationship, has learned and has privily whispered to you of this sacred mystery, love. Just so much as each one, in the inviolable solitudes of his own consciousness, has learned to connect with this, or with any great word, just that, and never a grain more, it can summon. And if endeavor be made to explain any such by others, the explanation can come no nearer; it can only send words to your ear, each of which performs its utmost office by inviting you to call up and bring before your cognizance this or that portion of your mental experience. But always what answers the call is your mental experience, no less yours, no less wedded to your life, than the blood in your arteries; it cannot be that of any other.

And the same is true, or nearly the same, respecting the most obvious outside matters. Suppose one to make merely this statement, *I see a house*. Now, if the person addressed has ever had experience of the act of vision, if he has ever seen anything, he will know what *see* means; otherwise not. If, again, he has ever seen a house, he will know what *house* denotes; not otherwise. Or suppose, that, not knowing, he ask what a house is, and that the first speaker attempt to explain by telling him that it is such and such a structure, built of brick, wood, or stone; then it is assumed that he has seen

stone, wood, or brick, that he has seen the act of building, or at least its result;—and in fine, the explanation, every syllable of it, can do no more than appeal to perceptions of which the questioner is assumed to have had experience.

We do, indeed, gain an approximate knowledge of things we have never seen. For example, I have an imperfect notion of a banian-tree, though I have never seen one; but it is only by having seen other trees, and by having also had the perceptions to which appeal is made in describing the peculiarities of the banian. So he who is born blind may learn so much concerning outward objects as the senses of touch, hearing, smell, and taste can impart to him; and he may profit by verbal information to such extent as these perceptions enable him. But the perception itself, and so thought, faith, and in fine all mental experience whatsoever, whether of high order or low, whether relating to objects within us or to objects without, take place only in the privacy of our own minds, and are in their substance not to be transferred.

Observe with precision what is here said. The mental experience of each man, if it be of any spiritual depth, has transacted itself in his nature in virtue, to a most important degree, of spiritual relationship with other human beings. There never was an act of development in any man's soul that did not imply a humanity, and involve the virtue of social affinity. I should be dumb, but for the ears of others; I should be deaf, that is, my human ear would be closed, but for human voices; and there is no particle of human energy, and no tint of human coloring, for which we are not, in part, indebted to vital human fellowship. Nevertheless, of this experience, though in the absence of social connection it could not have occurred, not one jot nor tittle can be made over to another by means of words. It can hoist its verbal signal, and the like experience in other souls may interpret the sign; it can do no more.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.