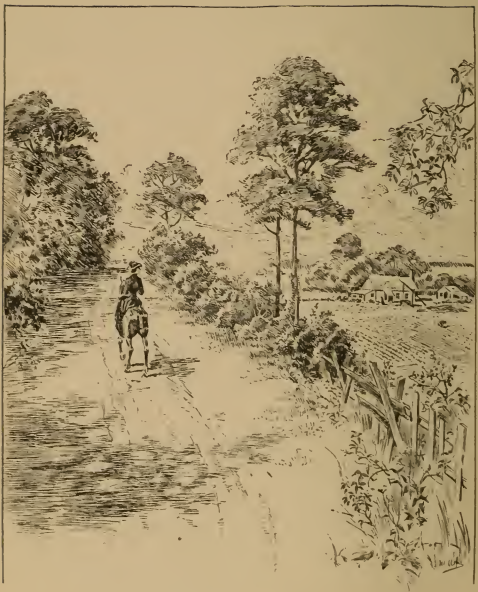
SEEN FROM THE SADDLE

BY

ISA CARRINGTON CABELL

HARPER'S BLACK & WHITE SERIES



"IN THE SADDLE"

SEEN FROM THE SADDLE

BY

ISA CARRINGTON CABELL

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1893

OTHER VOLUMES IN

Harper's "Black and White" Series.

Illustrated. 32mo, Cloth, 50 cents each.

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PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

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TO

S. L. W.

INTRODUCTION

It is one of our modern notions that almost everything in life depends upon our point of view, and the artists of the pen and the brush are wandering round in search of the proper point. Our ancestors, not many generations ago, used to see the world mainly from the saddle, and it cannot be doubted that their view of it was virile, and, on the whole, cheerful. We know, as a matter of fact, that the world is instantly changed when one mounts a horse. The rider is in a state to make an image of it different from that formed by the footpad, or the traveller by rail. Perhaps he shares the spirit of the horse, perhaps his elation is due to his slight elevation above the earth, perhaps he is affected by the uncertainty which imparts an air of adventure to the shortest excursion, that is so free to bend to the least whim of the rider or the horse. At any rate, he rides away into a novel world, either in the freshness of a spring morning or the poetic light of a summer evening, when the apple-trees are in blossom or

the corn is hanging out its silken tassels, and the most familiar roads and by-ways are created anew for him. It happens, also, that the fatigue of the exercise does not extend to the brain as it does in walking, and the point of view of the rider is apt to be wholesome and hopeful.

What the world is seen from the top of a bicycle we have yet to learn, for the riders of those wheels of modern progress are too much occupied by their own equilibrium and appearance and speed to pay much attention to the sentiments that Nature suggests to her loving observers. In these witty and sympathetic studies of a New England summer we return again to the companionship of a very noble animal, with whom is connected whatever is most romantic in the history of our race, and who has been the sharer and inspirer of much of our noblest poetry and achievement. Perhaps when steam and electricity have entirely relieved him of the degradation of ignoble labors, he may become exclusively the comrade of our hours of ease and pleasure, and young women and young men will find health in his society, and learn that on his back they can any hour ride away from habits of morbid introspection into a cheerful world.

C. D. W.

SEEN FROM THE SADDLE

I

DOLLY the mare has been trained by a girl. The girl is at college building on her high-school foundation, and has probably got over all the freakish feminine ways she taught Dolly, and sobered down into a disciplined character. A disciplined character is produced by a college education. But Dolly has not left off a single womanish wile since her mistress bade her good-bye last September. She has a little brown head which she twists and turns as if she were looking in a mirror, and she thinks it clever to prance and caper when she is mounted. When she hears a step behind her, like the girl in Mrs. Browning's pretty poem, she pricks up her ears and runs.

Gretchen, Dolly's mistress, has a friend who teaches in a horse kindergarten, and he says if he had had the educating of the mare this would be a very different story. His colts get up to an early breakfast, take a warm bath before eating it, and then exercise according to the best hygienic methods. Not the sound of a whip or a cross word is heard in all the great stock farm, where hundreds of horses are reared; but when one of them is disobedient or frisky, the trainer takes him up to the printed rules that are pasted on the stable wall and bids him look at them. That one action, full of dignified sorrow, breaks the colt's heart. He turns away crimson with mortification, and never jumps or runs out of time again. But Dolly cannot read. Teach her? It is too late. You must teach a colt to read the hour it is born. If you begin later it is a useless task. When, then, are we to start with our children? Start? Have we not been told to begin by educating their ancestors, and are not their ancestors hard at it in literature classes and language classes and whist classes, for the sake of posterity?

Dolly and the bay and their riders started

out the other morning with a gayety of spirit and a youthfulness of body they have learned to know do not come with a good conscience but by living under a friendly sky. They were just as good and almost as young during all that terrible rainy spell last week, and they felt old and wretched. And there are philosophers who tell us we are responsible for our mental and moral attitudes! The wind was blowing, but it blew as if it loved them, and the sunshine showered down softly through delicate green leaves. In the tender blue depths above the crows were sailing lazily; their "caws," "caws" were the discord needed to complete the harmony of the bird songs. People who play or listen to Bach will understand.

They started down Farmington Avenue at a brisk trot. There were two young ladies on bicycles who turned out for them and gave them the courtesy of the road. One looked very pretty in her blue habit and little gold-braided cap; and she had got some distance up the avenue before Dolly's rider recognized her as the little school-teacher with the pale face and the

black gown and straw hat all too big for her, who goes down-town in the 8.30 tram.

"Dear! dear!" Dolly's rider exclaimed; "I wish her young man could see her now!"

"Whose young man? How do you know she's got a young man? If she has, how do you know it would be best for either of them? Besides, a woman who rides on a bicycle is emancipated and does not want a young man. She is pledged to her work and her ambition. She would not resign it to be a cook or a seamstress without wages." This from D., who rides the bay. Dolly's rider perceived that he had been reading the *Arena*, and was talking with the zeal of a person to whom this question is novel and interesting; she therefore humored him.

"Maybe her young man," she said, "is willing to relinquish everything for the love of the schoolma'am, in order to attain to the sphere of a husband and father, the only true and real life for any noble man." This sentiment had such a familiar sound and such a reasonable sound that they had turned into Sisson Avenue before D. realized the neat turn of the tables. How many thousand times he had heard it with com-

placency with "wife and mother" substituted for "husband and father."

"I am going to Parkville," he said. "I am interested in the growth of the city;" but both knew that going to Parkville was Dolly's doing, not theirs. While they were talking about spheres, she took her head. They trotted down a long, shadeless street; the sun shone hot, there was a brick house at the end of the lane with "cool lager-beer" lettered on the outside; little ambitious houses are scattered about between grocery stores; one has a tiled façade, or rather the whole side of the suburban villa is thus decorated, and other houses are painted in glowing colors, all yellow or all red, or shingled in all the hues of the rainbow. Having once said he wanted to see Parkville, D. stuck to it. He does not read his Emerson enough to know that consistency is the hobgoblin of a small mind, but a sudden flash of memory lighted the little suburb with a vivid interest. "D.," said Dolly's rider, "Patrick lives in Parkville." Now, Patrick is the hired man, and they see his slim, loose-jointed figure every day and regard it with no great curiosity; but that

he dwelt in one of those neat little houses invested the whole place with a human interest.

"He lives in a white house with a porch, and he had his picture taken sitting on it; his little girl was in the yard and his wife at the well." This Dolly's rider repeated eagerly, and for some time they went about looking for the white house and the porch and the little girl and the woman at the well, and Patrick, the presiding divinity, but they did not find them. After they got on the middle Farmington Road, D. suggested that the people had probably gone into the house since the picture was taken last summer, but the remark came too late to destroy the interest in Parkville.

You know the middle road to Farmington, up hill and down, with farms lying on either side: the young grain rows checkered the brown fields, the maples cast long shadows upon the sloping knolls, and beyond the acres of greensward and sunshine were bounded by the tenderer green of the forest. Almost all the way is shaded by elm or maple trees some pious soul, on whom be peace, planted for the comfort of the

wayfarer; the houses are set up close to the road, with green untrodden yards that lead to small white doors, for there are no paths from the front door to the street or road; people go in from the side entrance or at the back, and these riders had a feeling that these closed doors opened into the best room, that dark and gloomy abode of respectability. So uniform is this custom of shutting up the front of the house, that when they passed a large white house with the grass all trodden down, as if with the tramp of heavy boots, between the low white porch and the gate, and they saw that all the windows were up in the front room, they did not need Dolly's quickened pace and little startled shy to tell them what had happened. Was he glad to quit the narrow bounds of a New England countryside for the great world of mystery in which for so many sordid years his speculative mind had dwelt—the master of the house who had been carried thence but yesterday? It did not seem an uncheerful place to live in, that sunshiny day; all the crop was growing in even rows, and the wide barn doors were open as if they expected the hay to be

brought in; the tall green oats waved in the fields under the breath of the soft wind; there was a fragrance of wild honeysuckles and clover, and in front of the door, almost overshadowing it, grew a great apple-tree, white with blooms, and the meadow was canopied with their wide-spreading branches. There is something in the perfume and the color of certain flowers or trees that affects the character of the people of the country they grow in. The land of the orange flower and the olive is the land of song, of indolence, of music, of sensuous ease. Even the habitant of a climate like England falls under the spell, and in a grove of orange-trees is impelled to write "Childe Harold" or "Don Juan." The apple-tree is like the New England character; there are the gnarled trunks, the deep ruts, the pale, pure blossoms, with pink-veined hearts, shedding pure fragrance. Did anybody ever write a poem of passion under an apple-tree? Only the look at it and the scent of it is a reproof to passion, and a call to conviction. It is not sensuous, it is not even dreamy or indolent. It is penetrating, spicy almost, and delicate with the shy sweetness

of the New England heart. Yes, it was a pity to have to leave the world while the apple-trees were blossoming.

"We are sure of a good crop of apples? We are certainly safe from frost?" The hired man who was ploughing by the fence shook his head.

"I don't know as it's safe till June," he said; "and I don't know as it's safe then."

"Think of the man who lived here, D.," said Dolly's rider. "Six months in the year with the road that leads to the world all buried in the snow, and all the hill-side white with snow, and the wind whistling around the house, and he crouched there before the fire, the cold chilling his bones. I've been thinking why all the cults and isms are born in New England. For all those months people have nothing to do but to sit by the fire and dream, and speculate and evolve queer fancies out of their brains. Who ever heard of a social reform in this country south of Baltimore; was a new community, or an 'outcomer,' ever indigenous to a hot climate? It's the same in Europe; there are no nihilists in Italy;

it takes the cold of Russia to generate them."

"There are insurrections in Chile," said D., who reads the newspapers.

"Oh, but an insurrection is a passion not a plan, and it is generally a revolt against physical not spiritual nor intellectual oppression."

But Dolly started to run, and the conversation took a turn. She ran up a hill and down to a little stream where clear sweet water splashes over queer-looking gold colored sands. There is a big elm at the deep part where the horses stop to drink, and two orioles celebrated their coming, or the day, by sitting on the fence and singing, first a solo and then a duet; the notes fell like glittering drops of silver into the gliding stream below. A slender white rose-bush was growing up against the fence, not climbing, but swaying towards it as if for protection, with the graces of youth and an inexpressible charm of beauty. It made the horseback people think of a young girl in her father's house. It was a cheerful ride, the very fields looked busy with their early summer growth. They hurried along be-

tween the silver willows and rustling alders, and they looked across the meadows, where the cattle stood in clover, to the blue heights of the Talcott range. A little plantation of soft maples had just put out their blooms. If a painter had painted it, not Mr. Bradford Torrey himself could have told whether it was an autumn or a spring scene, for all the blossoms were a brilliant red, and drooping over an old stone house that was half-covered with a red vine, looked more like October's signal of warning than May's flag. They stopped at a white house on the hillside to get water. An old man drew it for them from the well. He was a lean old man, and he had a quid of tobacco in his cheek; but he was glad to see them, and he offered to go in the house for a glass, speaking depreciatingly of the tin dipper which these city people greatly preferred.

"I guess," he said, with a pleased chuckle, "you don't get no such water in Hartford; they say it's terrible bad there." Did the draught from the clear cool well taste the sweeter for the thought that for all their town meetings and their church privileges the city had nothing half so good to drink? Dolly's

rider and D. could afford to be more generous. There was a portly female form at the window—a narrow window, shaded by white curtains. "She's good to him, D.," said Dolly's rider. "He's all stained up with chewing tobacco, so she must let him do as he likes."

But the cheerfulest of rides cannot go on forever without something that if not exactly pathetic suggests melancholy. There had been a high wind the night before, and on the road coming home they saw a great willow split in two, and one half, laden with spring leaves, lay prone on the ground. The heart of the tree, black and crumbling as if smitten by lightning, was bared to the pitiless sunshine.

"That's what it got for trying to be young," said D., grimly. "It bore the cold of winter, the heavy snow, the icy blast, and spread its wide branches skyward, vigorous and strong. If it had been content to put out a few elderly sprouts to show it was alive, we could never have seen that rotten heart. It was the weight of the young spring leaves that broke it down, not the wind or the weather, but all its vitality went

out to support them. And in return they sapped its life. Its pride and its beauty were its destruction. Ah, well-a-day!"

"Like old Mr. B. after his wife died. Don't you remember the spruce gait and the new clothes and the frisky airs—and then, poor old dear—the paralytic stroke?" said Dolly's rider.

But D. protested. "Don't vulgarize my simile by applying it; that's the fatal practicality which is the death of art. A woman cannot be a great artist because she always wants to utilize things. I never saw one of your sex who could let a flower go on blooming in a secluded spot. She must gather it, impelled by a queer morality that it would be selfish to waste it on the wind and the leaves and the grass it was created for. If she hears a bird sing, she must try to cage it. When you *do* get your rights good-bye to romance. We'll all be *en evidence*, every mine worked to its final yield. You'd banish the dead languages from the colleges as of no commercial value, and manufacture sonnets for the occasion as Mr. Brander Matthews is teaching the Columbia boys to do."

"You shall not say we are not romantic; we can get married and still make heroes of our husbands—if that does not imply the highest imaginative faculty, well, I'd want to know!" retorted Dolly's rider, and then she gave the mare the least little possible touch of the whip, and the theorist was left far behind, as with the wind in their faces they flew down the shady lanes and by the open-mouthed school-children and the man shut up in the red milk-cart and the tram and the jolly red-faced conductor, who touched his cap in a burst of sympathy. But when they got home Dolly's rider had to sit perched upon the saddle till some male person came to take her down.

There's a moral in this situation.

II

THEY set out for Bloomfield, but there are as many ways of going there as there are ways to go to Rome, especially if it does not really greatly matter whether you get there or not; but one has already taken a step towards making a ride interesting, if one has fixed on a destination—not but that there are people who like indefiniteness, who like to set out of a June morning with the world before them, and D. is one of this kind. If he had his way he would ride straight out of his own farm-yard into the bank of blue clouds that strives to bound his horizon; he could follow a lane that has no turning, lose himself in a forest of Arden. But Dolly's rider is another sort. D. says, "We'll go somewhere," meaning nowhere. Dolly's rider agrees to the somewhere and thinks of Bloomfield. The vagueness which makes the charm of his wanderings gives her the sensation of being adrift and rudderless, but it is a

pathetic quality of the female mind that it has learned through necessity to reverse nature. Dolly's rider with the strongest inclination to definiteness gratifies it by a ruse. She makes believe she is going to do a thing, and by the exercise of imagination, a faculty D. denies her, gets the poor comfort of being self-deceived. It was this way, therefore, they set out for Bloomfield, turning sharply out of Forest Street into Hawthorne Street, crossing the railroad bridge and riding to the open, where they turned and went up the hill towards Trinity and by Zion Hill Cemetery.

That was several days ago, and the cold had held so much of spring in its closed fingers that the leaves had not burst into full foliage, and looking across the meadows they had their last view for the season of an unobstructed expanse; the limbs of the trees still defined against the horizon, and stretching their lengths against the sky.

"Let me have one more look at a free country; I don't like to peep out at the world from beneath a leafy canopy," said D., who by this time has no doubt revealed his very contradictory character, for he hates spring and he loves summer, yet he waxes

even sentimental over the first tender green of the leaves, a feeling in which Dolly's prosaic rider shares. Just as there are flowers whose odor is a key to closed doors of memory, so this first green of spring smites certain hearts. There is something in its tenderness, its freshness, a sense of the beginning of life in its soft youthfulness, that stirs the soul and wakes the immortal longing, that so long a time has slumbered, to bathe ourselves again in innocency.

The wood which slopes from the top of the hill to the river is a sweet and sylvan spot which, as neither of the horseback riders expects to sell it for city lots, I venture to say is far from the haunts of fashion and the bustle of traffic. From this green pinnacle they saw the river's curve and the willows that fringe its banks, and thought the turrets of the red houses made Hartford, from a distance, look like Rothenburg. There are chestnuts and beeches in the lower grove, and ferns and wind-flowers grow luxuriantly in the green depths, but only a few great oaks shade the upper part, and a field of buttercups shimmers in the morning's shine from the slope of the hill to the

meadow beyond. I wonder why we cannot grow sentimental over yellow flowers—why the color of yellow is, in fact, inimical to sentiment. Gold has its poetical uses—gates of gold, streets of gold, golden harps, girls, lads, hearts, but the element of pathos is wanting. When the sun sets it sets as often in yellow as in purple clouds, but substitute yellow for purple in Whittier's "Psalm,"

> "Till care and trial seem at last
> Though memory's sunset air,
> Like mountain ranges over past
> In *yellow* distance fair."

You have the idea, but you have spoiled the poem. D. and Dolly's rider saw a field of clover with the wind blowing over it one afternoon in Sicily, last spring, and as the bells bowed to the breeze and all that delicious, undulating, pink meadow waved before them, its beauty smote their hearts with a pleasure so keen that it was almost pain, but they saw the charming sight of this field of buttercups bathed in sunshine with dry eyes.

They didn't see the grass that stretches

from field to field with unhindered growth in such a spirit of cheerful indifference. As the breeze blew over it it might have been a long succession of billows, while the gray blooms looked like the crests of the waves, and the clover field beyond became easily the depths of the farther ocean. Dolly's rider even said the birds that flew over it or dipped into the spray were sea-birds.

> "Nay, rather, comrade, let them be
> Like skylarks bold, for they, said he,
> Fly straight to heaven."

D. quoted from the Provençal poem. "The grass need not seem like anything else than itself to please and charm me. It has the natural waving line of beauty, it is so soft, so silent, so restful to look at, and one has a sort of sentiment about it when one remembers that what we have had all our lives beneath our feet will one day lie above us, while the proof that we are not forgotten will be in its tender green." They were passing Zion Hill Cemetery, and the cared-for graves suggested these thoughts, which, after all, were not sad but rather of a pleasing melancholy.

"When it comes to birds," said Dolly's rider, trotting briskly down the hill into the sunshine, "you'd better look out for what names you give them. I was talking about hearing orioles sing the other day, and somebody insisted orioles never sang from the 10th of May till the 15th of August. They keep a little red note-book—no, no, that was unintentional—that they may never forget the date, and that ignorant people may not confound them with bobolinks, who are quite a different family."

"Do you know," said D., severely, "what all these scrappy little bits of information they gather from all sorts of unreliable sources do for people? There is one I could name who used to be like a glass of pure water, flavorless, it is true, but a clear, sweet draught. But somebody came along and put in a little claret, and another a little port, and another a little tea, and still another a little brandy, and spoiled the water and made a—detesta—"

"Oh, D.! that's a champagne cocktail, and the most refreshing of drinks! Thank you so very much. I don't deserve to be compared to anything so good!"

The path at this juncture became too narrow to ride abreast. Dolly's rider shot on ahead. In these recollections why does Dolly's rider always shoot on ahead? Who wrote the book of Joshua and made him the hero of a hundred battles? Who carved on marble and stone the acts of the great Pharoah, Rameses II., whose mighty spirit pervades all Egypt to this day?

Some carper likely will declare there is no honeysuckle lane between Hartford and Bloomfield. But probably he did not choose to take these riders' route to Bloomfield. The little lane with which they made acquaintance is bounded on either side by a tall rail-fence, not the most modern style of enclosure, and rather primitive and rude without its covering of vines, but there is nothing quite so pretty when it is intwined with Virginia-creeper and trumpet-flowers; the corners bulge out like flying buttresses and the vines hang over in cascades, which after a while will be aflame with color. Now they are a green mantle with the pink honeysuckles for a fringe. The bumblebees were zooning, and though they could not see the little stream that ran alongside

the road for the flowers and creepers that covered it, they were haunted with the sound of running water.

"It isn't the air or the sunshine or the flowers or the sky that makes summer to me," said D., "it is that low murmur as if of growing things. I can hear the grass start and the flowers spring; day by day the soul of things fleeing up countless ladders,

> "'Airy pyramid of grass,
> At its motion yields a pass,
> Through the wind-loved wheat it flows,
> Up the tufted sedge-flower goes.'"

I used to say that verse to myself when I was a little boy and went out into the meadow and buried my body in the grass. I didn't know whether it was the fairies I heard talking or the flowers, but I knew it meant life, which was summer, the only time we really are alive, the rest of the year we are in the chrysalis."

"Did you really think that when you were a child?" asked Dolly's rider. "You know the reminiscences of childhood are rarely sincere. We relate what it is probable a child thought or said under known circum-

stances, or what we have heard older people say we said, but our own memories of our own thoughts, are they reliable? Tolstoï's autobiography with 'invention' written on every page destroyed my faith in his whole scheme of life."

"Of the thoughts that possessed or flitted over my childish mind," said D., lazily, "my recollections are as a dream after daylight. I keep them as a laughing summer keeps hoar and frost; as an infant's eyes at eve show morning grief. As I recall the sound of a stream gone by, or a vanished bird's song, or chimes that have died a silver death, I recollect them as day recollects shadows the dawn has put to flight."

"Oh, D.!" exclaimed Dolly's rider, "you don't mean to make me think that very free translation of Gautier's *D'Elle que reste-il Aujourdhui* was your own thoughts about yourself when you were a little boy!"

"The question of the line of demarkation between the assimilation of an idea and plagiarism is too subtle to be discussed on a racking horse," replied D., oracularly. "My crime was in adapting the idea so clumsily that you recognized it."

"But, D.," cried Dolly's rider, who was quick to respond to such an unusual, an alarming symptom as humility, "I knew because I found your bookmark yesterday in *Chansons et Ballades*."

"That's the way doctors diagnose diseases. They see the oyster-shells under the porch, and when they say the patient has indigestion, people exclaim, 'What wisdom!'" said D., coming to himself with a jerk of the bridle.

That jerk meant a gallop through the lane till they reached the main road. At the fork they came to a house they had at first thought deserted. It was an old, brown house, weather-worn, and drooping at the eaves, the shutters hung on broken hinges, the porch was held up by a rotten post, the other had fallen; tall grass and weeds grew in the front yard, and front windows with the panes out had the look of a toothless mouth. But it had been a good house in its day, and the garden at the side was planted with peach and apple trees, and there were great shrubs and lilac bushes blooming in the wantonness of neglect, that some time or other must have been pruned

and tended. The horseback riders thought of the people who had lived and labored, and hated and loved there, and who probably, wherever they are, think about it with regretful tenderness, as people do of the place they once called home. The desolation was so apparent that they were startled when they saw some chickens run from beneath the porch, and, surer sign of human occupancy, a brood of young ducks waddle out of the back yard. They rode around to the side entrance, and, though they saw nobody, a yellow calico skirt hanging on the clothes-line revealed the foolishness of theorizing.

"Oh dear!" moaned Dolly's rider, "they haven't gone away or died or anything. Just been shiftless and no faculty—and I was just getting ready to—"

"I know what you were getting ready to do," interrupted D. "You were getting ready to sentimentalize over the old homestead, and the ghosts of little feet, and mother's arm-chair. It's a remarkable fact that eighty-eight poems to the hundred in the English language are about home and mother. I for one am glad there is no home

in the French tongue. It saves us from another deluge of domesticity."

The bitterness in his tone puzzled Dolly's rider for an instant, then a light lightened the darkness. "Why, D., it's high noon and lunch time!" she exclaimed. They turned the horses' heads and galloped home through the still, hot sunshine; so still and hot that the horse-chestnuts hung their white blossoms in limp languor and the wind-flowers had shut their eyes and the people in the suburban villas all gone into the house and left the red chairs to emptiness.

When they got into their own street Dolly's rider remarked that they had not been to Bloomfield. "Bloomfield?" said D., "who ever said anything about Bloomfield?"

"Nobody *said*," said Dolly's rider, meekly. "They just *thought*."

III

THEY started at an early hour on that perfect day put down in the calendar as Tuesday, the 6th of June. There was a fine freshness in the air, and the dew on the grass and flowers brought out the morning sweetness.

Turning into Albany Avenue, for a little while, they thought they might as well go to the capital of that great State whose vote will decide the next Presidential election. It is a wide, open thoroughfare, big enough for two stage-coaches to thunder down it twice a day, full of passengers and news; but after they had made up their minds to follow it to its destination, Dolly's rider's fickle ear was caught by the sound, "Here is the famous Blue Hills Road that is one of the seven ways to Bloomfield."

"There's a hill at the top of that stretch, D., and it's getting hot; let's give up Albany for to-day," she said, eagerly, and D., with-

out a word of protest, turned into the famous Blue Hills Road.

This remarkable acquiescence had a singular effect. For three good moments Dolly's rider did not say a word. Then she rode up to him and asked if he was angry. The relations between these people are like those that existed between Mary and Charles Lamb. "We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits," says Elia of himself and his cousin Bridget—"yet so as with a difference. We are generally in harmony with occasional bickerings, as it should be with near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood than expressed; and once upon my dissembling a tone in my voice more kind than ordinary, my cousin burst into tears and complained that I was altered."

The Blue Hills Road—the famous Blue Hills Road—lies between a succession of farms, some of them market-gardens, some flower-gardens, some bearing wheat, or perchance some other grain. It is shaded by maples and oaks, and there are little houses set farther back in the yards than one sees on the Farmington Road, but they are not so good nor so characteristic. Now and

then one comes to a splendid oak, strong, vigorous, spreading sheltering arms that stretch almost from one side of the way to the other. But oaks are democratic. They grow in the corner of a humble little yard consecrated to pigs and chickens, and the great place on the hill with landscape gardens and circular drives is bare of them.

"Why do you call this road famous, D.?" asked Dolly's rider, after a sunny stretch of monotony.

"Why do people always speak of their towns as 'good old towns?'" replied D. "Besides, *I* didn't make it famous. That's always the way," he continued. "People insist on making the person who is showing the way or who has read a book first responsible for the road or the contents of the book. I'd been at Richfield two days before Polly arrived, and she asked me whether I always had such weather. I told her it wasn't my weather. And then when I read *Fire and Sword* before you did you never left off asking me why Zagobla did thus and so, and what Pan Yan meant by that. All I have to do with the naming of this road is to repeat it has been called

the famous Blue Hills Road since the settlement of Hartford."

But while he was muttering his woes something happened. A man in a buggy, wearing the United States postal service uniform dashed by. He stopped at the fence of a little white house with "for sale" placarded on a sign in the yard. There were tall weeds and grasses blocking the walk to the door, and a red rose-bush, wild and turbulent, stretched across the best room windows. The postman got out and carefully extracted a letter from his pocket, looked at the superscription and then at the house, and started to open the gate. A bent old man in his shirt-sleeves was in the back yard drawing water from a creaking well.

"Oh, D.!" cried Dolly's rider, "it's from his son out West, you may be sure, and they sent it all the way from Hartford by special delivery. It has money in it, I'm certain, and the money will pay off the mortgage, and the house needn't be sold. Just think how really paternal the Government is, for a ten-cent stamp sending that man and horse all the way out here to bring that check to that poor old citizen."

"He has put the letter in the box on the gate-post," said D., dryly, "and now he has gone over across the way to give the people in the red house their mail. See, he has turned back. It's the regular nine o'clock delivery—we're not out of corporation limits yet."

Dolly's rider's spirits fell, and she felt so disappointed that she rode quickly past the old man, a vague feeling that she had raised hopes merely to dash them overcoming her with shame. She needed D.'s "Well, you know you didn't *say* anything to him about the check his son had sent him," to restore her to tranquillity.

They had ridden two miles farther, perhaps, without adventure, when suddenly D. exclaimed, with the air of having known all the time what they were coming to, "There are the Hartford meadows and the Blue Hills. Now you see, I hope, why they call this the famous Blue Hills Road."

An undulating plain stretched before them, and beyond was a fringe of willows, and farther still an open country free and fair, and then the lines of mountains, irregular but soft in outline, so far that all the

green was blue, yet near enough to have a sheltering, embracing look, enclosing peace and shutting out the world. The meadows lay glowing in the sun; a sweep of daisies, another sweep of buttercups, another of purple asters, interwoven in the whole and yet apart, a carpet of rich hues, a harmony of tones. Every now and then Nature makes a spurt and shows us what we might be, what richness, what beauty, what variety. Here are the possibilities of life, every genus keeping its own individuality and doing its best with it, its best being to grow, to bloom, to scatter seed that in other seasons will go to the carpeting of wider, fairer fields. In sight of it, these people made up their minds that even on horseback and riding at full tilt down a smooth piece, they could not get away from the sermon of the flowers.

You turn off the main road and take a cut across some outlying farms to get to Bloomfield. There were flocks and herds lying under the trees, and people were hoeing and ploughing, some coaxing their teams in the Irish brogue, but all Americanized to the extent of adapting our slouching gait. Here and there was a large old house rambling

into successive outhouses, but these were scattered at long distances, and Dolly's rider, who had talked so much about Bloomfield that it had become a miniature New York in her mind's vision, was disappointed when D. said they had got there.

"Not to the village," he explained, "but the town that is the township; the village is yonder." They looked down the hill and saw a white spire gleaming; the hot air rushed up as from a funnel; they were under a sky all sun; it was quivering and tinkling with bird songs. Indeed, they saw a plenty of birds, and birds of every variety; there were finches in three-colored harlequin suits and tanagers in plenty, and red-eyes ornithologists call *vireo salitarii*, who, however, did not sing, but fed greedily, not holding with Mrs. Browning that we may prove our work the better for the sweetness of our song, and—the critic may doubt—a little humming-bird who gave these riders a sensation such as they might have had on seeing a flower from the khedive's gardens at Shoobra, or a feather from the shah's peacock. This tiny insect-like creature is indifferent to space. He spent last winter in

Central America or Cuba; he will fly through the air on unwearied wing at the first breath of October. What are days or nights to him seeking the happy isles? What the blue ether in his search for eternal summer?

One wonders how these people who live in Bloomfield township amuse themselves; they are too far from the village for tea and gossip, and not enough in the country to be reconciled to solitude. One woman, they saw with pleasure, had adapted herself to her surroundings, and yet bent to the cult of culture. She had on a man's old straw hat and a calico dress made in that happily defunct mode known as Mother Hubbard fashion, but she was looping vines over her porch, and in the yard she had arranged what is known in art as a Gypsy Kettle. The kettle was painted a bright red, and in it grew a flourishing red geranium. The illusion of a dinner, cooking over a fire out-of-doors, was complete.

Bloomfield reached did not look like New York. The houses are small and simple, with no soft discoloration of roof or wall, but a weather-beaten gray. It is not denied that there are mansard roofs and shingles

twisted awry, and the town-hall is a house of wood which we will not say is not built on the model of a Grecian temple. But for the most part it looks like an agricultural village somewhat intrenched upon by the modern spirit.

There are two stores for general merchandise, and two churches (was there ever a community so diminutive as to require only one?), the smaller of which, a little wooden building, set in a green grove and gleaming with white paint and green blinds, delighted Dolly's rider.

"D., I'm so glad to see it," she said. "The very church Longfellow had in mind when he wrote 'The Village Blacksmith.' How do I know? Oh, as Falstaff knew the true prince, and the witches Macbeth. I should like to be here next Sunday and see the church filled with people, farmer folk with strong, keen faces, the women with a sort of Sunday peace in their tired eyes; the girls in their white gowns, and the shy, stalwart young fellows with bunches of these Bloomfield roses pinned on their coats. I'd like to hear the blacksmith's daughter trilling her clear high notes up there in the

choir, the bass rolling out his melodious measures, a little *rubato*, and—yes, I really would like to listen to the sermon from the white-haired clergyman in rusty black broadcloth, who reconciles predestination and free-will in an hour and a half's discourse."

"For Heaven's sake," said D., "talk low or somebody will overhear you, and we'll be up for libel. The people in Bloomfield get their clothes in New York, and they have a choral society which directs the time of music, and the preacher is giving a course of lectures on Esoteric Buddhism."

He looked anxiously over his shoulder, and Dolly's rider, who is moral to the extent of feeling sorry for the consequences of sin, galloped out of Bloomfield, and did not feel safe till they got to Tumbledown Brook, which they ventured to think out of the selectmen's jurisdiction. They did not cross the bridge, but went down into the water and let Dolly and the bay splash about in that cool stream. There were tall purple irises on the banks of this pretty brook with the melodious name, growing straight and strong amid cascades of ferns, and as they

looked under the arch of the bridge they followed the course of the stream through a winding way, banked on either side with wild roses, that turned their round, pink faces to the sunshine.

They met only one travelling party between Bloomfield and the Albany turnpike. An ancient buggy drawn by a long sorrel horse, who might have been a plough-horse or a racer, it was hard to guess, drawing an old man and his little grandson, for so these people divined their relationship. The old man had little blue eyes set in red flannel lids, and he wore a black broadcloth coat and flowered vest, his cotton shirt had a wide collar sewed to the band, and a wide brimmed felt-hat was pulled over his ears. The boy's mother, mindful of his irresponsible and extravagant way of growing, had made his jeans trousers very long, and his little white shirt, which almost reached his knees, was buttoned to them. He stood up straight in the buggy and drove carefully, his freckled little face somewhat puckered, but his mouth firm and solemn. The old man clucked to the horse as if he were helping in the business of getting home, but the

boy knew where the responsibility lay. D. touched his hat to them and smiled, which Dolly knew meant, "I like that boy," and they both nodded back gravely, but they did not take off their hats, deeming it, perhaps, a silly city fashion.

"And I like them for it," said Dolly's rider, stoutly. "I like to see people now and then who are a law unto themselves, and act as if they believed, even while exercising the small courtesies of life, what the Constitution of the United States has declared, that all men are free and equal."

"Where does the Constitution make that interesting declaration?" queried D.

"That all men are free and equal? Why, it says it, of course; I don't know exactly where, it's enough that it's there—I don't carry the Constitution in my pocket."

"If you did you'd be safe never to find it," mocked D. "Some brigands caught an American woman going through Bulgaria the other day. She told them her jewels were in her pocket. After three hours' search they let her go, giving up the job. But that's not the point. Nowhere in the Constitution is there any such phrase—it says—"

"Oh, well—the Declaration of Independence, then," interrupted Dolly's rider. "I'm always getting them mixed."

"There is neither such a phrase nor such an idea in the Declaration," said D., turning into Albany Avenue.

"Then," exclaimed Dolly's rider, ecstatically, "I invented it. I feel like the Bourgeois Gentilhomme when he found he was talking prose."

But D. smiled compassionately. "You are simply quoting a phrase most governors of most States and most orators in the republic use and ascribe to the Constitution. You were misinformed, that was all."

"Then we are not all free and equal?" said Dolly's poor rider, disillusioned; "that is, not by the Constitution?"

"Oh, you are by a 'higher law,' perhaps," he said, lightly. "Mr. Seward used that phrase with good effect in early war times, when we wanted to make the proclamation of freedom. But it's too hot to use it now. It's too hot to do anything but go home."

And so they sought that refuge which has its uses when every other fails.

IV

HALF-PAST eight o'clock A.M.; thermometer 84° in the shade. They thought they would get to the open country by crossing Farmington Avenue at a little new street bordered by little green bushes and shrubs, but the little bushes cast no shadows, and the horseback riders passed through a fiery furnace of unobstructed sunshine. Dolly's eyes followed the gnats as they swam in the air, and her head swam with them. How much heat poured from a precipitate height would dissolve a solid into a liquid? How much heat burning into that liquid would change it into a ray of light? It was a strange sensation this—melting away before one's own eyes, disappearing in a flood of self. She watched the process in an impersonal, disinterested sort of way—the way Hadrian watched his soul's flight in the pretty poem:

"Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,"

and was taking a kind of dreamy pleasure in feeling the cumbrous flesh glow lighter, freer, more ethereal each instant, preparing to merge itself into a speck of gold and then to dance off and flicker through a green bough, when D.'s warning voice roused her.

"You'll lose your figure if you don't look out."

He said it in the tone he had heard members of his household use to each other when it was a question between cream with strawberries or a slender form, and the familiar sound and words had their effect. Dolly's rider lowered the thermometer twenty degrees by turning into Asylum Avenue, where the south-west wind met them and blew them into the seventies.

They got a fine view of the open country at the head of this street. The meadows are free of trees, except for a single oak here and there, or a spreading maple, and the sweep of the clover and grass is unobstructed on lowlands and uplands till the clearing is stopped by a deep border of pines. They looked cool and grateful to the eyes after that stretch of sun. At the blacksmith's shop at the cross-roads Dolly's

rider announced that the pair were thirsty, and so they rode up to a weather-beaten house at the top of the hill where a woman was ironing, her bench and board set out under the shade of a spreading elm. She was a tall, gaunt woman, poorly clad, and a number of infinitesimally small children were playing about her. The bay, restive after his gallop, plunged and wanted to go, so Dolly's rider forestalled D.'s getting off by asking her for a drink of water. She at once laid down her hot iron and made for the well. "No, no; just that from the pail there," they expostulated. But she smiled, and said: "I will draw you some. I only wish I had the old well-sweep. I've a sort of sentiment for those old wells. The water always seemed to me to be fresher and purer, especially if it's out of the old oaken bucket that hangs in the well."

"That's New England all over," said D., as they rode off. "That woman has probably never been out of this township since she was married. She is poor, hard worked; she doesn't have time probably to read a newspaper from daylight till dark; all her life is a round of daily drudgery; but she

has a refinement. Did you notice her accent, and a sentiment, even, that makes her wish for the well-sweep instead of that thing with a crank she turned, even if the crank is easier? Where else would you see a middle-aged woman, in a worn calico dress, ironing, and minding her children, and having an eye to the kitchen fire—all at the same time; and in the midst of it preserving a certain shy sentiment, and stopping in the midst of her work to be hospitable and to quote poetry?"

Dolly's rider looked thoughtful. "When I write a novel, D.—oh, it's simply a matter of practice and training; anybody can; none of the novelists nowadays have any talent; they despise talent, which is just an allurement into ideality instead of into what is real and true—I shall not try to make my New England woman just a creature in a narrow, prescribed world, crucifying her body and soul trying to keep up appearances, and pretending she has three gowns when she has only one. I shall put her in antislavery days, and under an orthodox minister, and let her work it out. There was tragedy enough then in these still New Eng-

land villages. I got a hint of what it was when I was on a carriage drive in Massachusetts last summer, and stopped at a little village for dinner. There was only one parlor in the tavern, so I didn't have to be conscientious and walk away when I got interested in a conversation. They were evidently old friends, who had met after a long separation. The man was a Westerner—that is, he had gone West in his early manhood; the other, an elderly woman, had stayed at home. He was big and prosperous and florid (he talked as if he were used to talk against a tornado); but she was little and prim and poor (her dress showed it), but her face was seamed with lines of determination: that little firm jaw, and small, thin-lipped mouth. From the drift of the conversation, I inferred the lady was talking of some common friend. 'I can't take you to see her,' she said, regretfully. 'You see we haven't really talked to each other for years. It was in the early abolition times we fell out. The Unitarians came in and I joined them, and then I joined the antislavery movement. She stayed orthodox. Her sister Mary Lizzie went with me. It was an awful time—fam-

ilies and friends divided. We were willing enough to be friendly, but they wouldn't. Jane passed me on the street for years without speaking. We suffered some—we come-outers.'

"The man laughed. 'You are a queer set here. You know I am a distiller,' he said, 'and last year I wrote out to Jonah to send me two barrels of apples; they were, of course, for table use. He always was the best fellow in the world; *couldn't* get religion when he was a boy—was too wicked, had no conviction of sin. *I* got it easy enough, and I guess he has by now. Well, he wrote back he was very sorry, but he couldn't send me the apples, because he was afraid I'd make some sort of spirit out of them. Pretty dear spirit! The apples were to cost $2.50 a barrel, and I make a gallon of whiskey out of 25 cents' worth of corn; but you see the conscience of the fellow.' And then he went to the little window and looked out in the street."

"That's the queer contradictory sort of stuff they're made of," said D., "these New Englanders. I suppose that Yankee farmer yearned to sell his winter apples, but he

loved something better than he did money, dear as that was. It makes a queer character, that thrift and cunning and saving spirit held in check by principles that lie like a granite foundation."

"And speaking of the difficulty of getting religion," said Dolly's rider, "up in Charlemont I heard a story about the village shoemaker. Everybody got religion in the periodical revival but Uncle Billy. At last the clergyman called on him in person and urged the matter on his attention. 'Well,' said Uncle Billy, 'I'll make a bargain. If you can convert me, I'll give you the best hog in my pasture.' The parson accepted the proposition, and they knelt down. After a fervent prayer of perhaps a half an hour the speaker paused. 'Go on,' said Uncle Billy, 'the hog's mine yet.'"

D. laughed. "That was his New England conscience; you see, he could no more let the clergyman have the hog if he hadn't justly earned it than he could have pretended to have got religion. But where is Tumbledown Brook?"

For it may as well be confessed here that the statement made in the last chapter that

the riders visited this charming spot was incorrect. They passed a brook, it is true, and the water tumbled prettily and the bridge looked as if it was going to; but it was not Tumbledown Brook. However, for their oath's sake—for they had promised themselves to go there—they rode till they passed the blacksmith's shop on the main road and turned into the wagon-road on the right, where they were assured they would find the fabled spring. A jolly-looking Irishman was coming down the path.

"How far is it to Tumbledown Brook?" asked Dolly's rider.

"It's as hot as blazes," said Paddy.

"Yes, I know; but how far is it?"

"It's as hot as blazes, I says."

"Yes, yes, I know, but how far is it to Tumbledown Brook?"

A puzzled look passed his face. He had been accustomed, they inferred, to the sort of person who took his casual remarks as a reply to any question put to him.

"It's as hot as bla—," he began, when D. rode up to him and fixed his gaze.

"How far is it to Tumbledown Brook, I say?" he demanded, stopping the way.

A light suddenly appeared to break on his inner being.

"Gosh!" he cried, "and it's a little better'n a mile from here to the top of the hill, and it's a good half mile from the top of the hill where I've been working to the woods."

"And is the brook in the woods?" said Dolly's rider.

"There's birds and trees there and a pretty path," he said, with a pleasant smile, "and it's a good day I am wishing you."

Both the horseback people nodded back again and smiled.

"I like Irish people," said Dolly's rider; "they can't bear to disappoint you by telling you they don't know."

"They never disappoint me by telling me that," said D. "I wonder if there is any such place as Tumbledown Brook?"

They rode on; the sun broiled and sizzled. They came to a great bare expanse where 200 workmen were hard at it clearing space for a reservoir. The great basin was shorn of its trees, a drill in the centre, an infernal looking black machine, uttering its buzzing roar; the men were marching in line carrying hods of red earth on their heads; the

work of cleaning out that great red-hot caldron looked like one of the hopeless tasks set by some malignant deity in an inferno.

They skirted the basin and rode into the green wood on the brow of the hill—oh, so still and green after the fiery furnace!—and walked their panting horses under the hemlocks dusky and sweet, and the fir-trees, whose fine pine-needles turned the ring of the hoofs to silence. Long shafts of light trembled through the birches dark and green and the maples dark and silvery, and through the delicate fans of the great red-oak leaves which flapped like monster dragon-flies in the wind. Tufted ferns waved in patches of brown and green moss, the azaleas growing in the sunny spots were spread with honey lest the dull bee forget to feed; the fir-cones thrust out their feathered heads from tangles of grasses and fungi, and by the trickling streams the toads had raised their small wet tents. Jewelled creatures, brown and old, moved in the green things; the riders looked up into the trees and saw bright, timid eyes shining, and heard the scamper of small feet and the rush

and beat of wings. A damp, sweet smell came up from the swamp, but where was Tumbledown Brook?

They rode to the clearing, then across country and into Reservoir Park; before they entered the wood they looked over the meadows covered with waving sedge, dark as it was bent by the wind, reflecting a grayish light from its under side. A farm-house here and there; a stretch of field; a fair open country; wooded heights; red roads cutting through patches of green; the sun shining on a weather-beaten gray barn turning it to silver—this is what they saw from the mountain-side; no Hartford, no Tumbledown Brook.

The Reservoir Park was also dark and green, and all this wood was alive with sound. The *What, what, what* of the screech-owl, the creak of the cricket, the brown pee-wees "cheeping" under the bushes, the caws of the crows, the song of the redeye singing for love, and of the wood-thrush singing for glory. The wind also took its part in the harmonious discords, and rustled and sighed and showered down pine leaves and turned the lily pads upsidedown to

show the crimson underneath. There was a trickle of water and murmur of hidden rills that flowed from little cool springs. The pools had shrunk to summer heat; on the sides, smooth, whitish water; in the middle, dark blue. The riders looked at the little minnows shut up in these clear basins, and sighed. Happy minnows! no big fish to eat you; no channel to lure you out of peace!

They took the road to the lower lake; it lay enclosed in the green woods, a sapphire set in emerald, shining with an inward fire. Midway in its clear depths the broken reflections of the sun danced like a rainbow on a flame of phosphorescent light, and close to the shore the rays fell obliquely—a shower of gold and precious jewels, as though Danäe were hid in the tall grass. The woods on the opposite shore looked dim, the haze of full noon settling upon them in blue mistiness. Ferns and iris, praised of the poets, the broad leaf potamogen rearing its great spikes, yellow ranunculus, pink swamp-lilies, lupins, blue and white with cup-like leaves to hold the dew—all these and many another thirsty

blossom fringed the banks. Was this the limpid stream and these the fields of Enna where Proserpina gathered flowers? It was not Tumbledown Brook.

And it had as well be admitted here that Tumbledown Brook was never reached by them. No more did the ancient voyagers find the spring of immortal youth; but they did not regret their quest. In looking for a little babbling stream, they found deep waters, and in exchange for the ferns and the bright-eyes that grew upon its bank, they strayed into the meadows of a goddess. And, in a way, they have the brook forever, for it dwells in their fancy—clearer, purer, sounding a sweeter melody than any brook that has its dwelling in the common-placeness of memory. One cannot be disillusioned of this sort of illusion, for it has no vulgar reality. And it is well for us that there are some places which must always exist in the imagination. If we could realize our visions we would not mount to heaven; we would simply bring heaven down to earth, and so limit ourselves to a purely practical existence.

"D.," said Dolly's rider, coming out of the

woods into the open, and regarding with sickening apprehension the white, stony, sun-smit road that lay between the paradise of —— Street and the spot where they stood, "why *can't* we fly?"

And D., in a cheerful and knowing tone, quoted Mr. Snagsby: "No wings."

V

EVEN D. admits that summer has been pretty persistent. We have had at least five days of it in succession. We haven't lighted the parlor fire since last Saturday; visitors whisper to each other in a confidential way that they have left off their flannels or have them on, making a merit of it in either case as people do about their intimate affairs. "I dared," "I resisted," one hears in asides, in the one case flaunting the recklessness, in the other the endurance. The white duck suit has made its appearance. This costume lasts a long time in New England. Every well-dressed man has one; but as he only gets a chance to wear it once in two years, and then for half an hour at a time, unless he has a stationary figure, his white duck has to show some adaptability. It would be silly to throw away a perfectly good, fresh-looking suit, neither worn nor rubbed, because the waistcoat is a

trifle tight and the coat a suspicion short-waisted; so for the fleeting summer days, when we get up in the nineties, we have a rare show of Hartford men in white linen clothes.

What's fashion, anyway? Trousers a trifle short? Englishmen wear them turned up over their shoe-tops all the year long—besides, it may rain. "Keep pulling your coat down in the back; it hitches up a little." "Yes, you look *very* nice, *so* becoming. I don't think it makes the *very least* difference; *everybody* understands. I don't believe a *human being* would notice. To be sure, if you stand that way *inviting* attention, doing everything to *make* it conspicuous, of course— Lost your figure? Nonsense; not lost, but gone before."

It is with these sweet home voices ringing in his ears the Hartford householder starts off every day this week, looking in his snowy apparel as much like a West Indian proprietor as possible. Another week of summer and he will have bought a Panama hat. We are trusting creatures.

The horseback riders started out with the intention of riding into the bank of low white clouds that hid the woods on

the right of Cedar Hill Cemetery. It was hot and dusty and after noon, but the haze lent itself to the landscape. The Cedar Hill Cemetery road rises and falls with the regularity of a pulse beat, and at every elevation the view widens and extends till it is stopped on the right by the Talcott range and on the left by the meadows of the Connecticut River. The nearer view of Hartford shows its red houses set in clumps of green trees, but a dip in the valley and only the church-spires rise out of the woods. Take them out of the landscape, and take out the cultivated fields that lie on either side of the road and stretch to the river on the one hand and the mountains on the other, and there is not a great deal of difference between the view the horseback riders had that afternoon and the sight vouchsafed the first settlers when at last their expectant eyes rested on the promised land. A wilderness of trees, a dense forest which a foreigner would not dream concealed a city and its people in its green depths.

The highest civilization has brought the face of Nature back to its original aspect, for Nature and man are instinctively at enmity.

She raises barriers of wood and stone against his inroads. She throttles him with her vines and creepers, tangles him in her branches, tempts him with bright flowers into wildernesses where he loses his way and is lured to his death. He spends years of toil in fighting the inroads of the forest, conquering Nature, clearing her out, rooting her out, subduing her; and when finally she yields, and he has cut and burned and trampled his way so that she lies a maimed, wounded thing at his feet, he goes to work to revivify her. He replants trees, sows seeds, christens weeds and flowers with rolling syllables, and in some spot selected by himself gives her what he pleases to call her liberty. "It looks like the country," is the highest praise one can bestow on some spot where he has elected Nature may follow her own bent.

In this fancy for swinging back to the original starting-point we don't confine ourselves to physical retrogression. As soon as we've got a religion well in hand, intellectual, comprehensive, liberal enough for us, we begin to search for the creed of the simple savage. The theosophists got back

to the *Iswara* of the Hindus, and, finding it quite rococo, are now hunting for what they call the *Mahath Aitamyam*—whatever that may mean, less meaning the better—of the whole cosmos. What does all this clamor for simplicity in thought, religion, manners, and life signify but going back into the wilderness we came from?

"D.," said Dolly's rider, looking over the fields which were so hardly won from savage Nature and savage man, "I should think you'd feel pretty badly, when you consider what your ancestors endured when they came over and settled this country; how they suffered privation and cold and hunger, and how they battled with the forest and stony ground all for the sake of Calvinism and Puritanism, and now is the Woman of the Seven Hills seated in glory and honor in your midst. All we can see of Hartford from this hill, except the gold ball of the capitol, are the twin towers of the Roman Catholic cathedral. You said I did not know my Constitution of the United States or my Declaration of Independence when I ventured to quote them the other day, but doesn't it seem queer to you that the coun-

try where the Roman Catholic Church has grown and flourished as it has done in no other country since its foundation, is governed under a constitution whose principles the church violently condemns?

"You know the *theory* of the republic is all men are free whatever the words of the Constitution may say. Everybody, provided he doesn't interfere with anybody else, may go his own way, worship according to his own forms or no forms, speak his own thoughts, have a free press, education —be at liberty, in fact.

"But the syllabus says men are not free; they are not capable of taking care of themselves; that the clergy must govern the laity; that education and the press must be under censorship; and as for liberty of thought, the very declaration that the Catholic religion is true and all others false puts an end to the theory of toleration."

"I will not argue with a person who gets her ideas of a democracy so literally from Froude," said D., "and who has a mere surface knowledge of the tenets of her government. The fact of the case is, religion should meet all human wants. Our the-

ology in New England got too intellectual. It was a philosophical religion, and reached only a certain portion of the people. You've got to have your religion in proportion to your intelligence. That advanced set of Protestantism of Schleiermacher and Bunsen we've been having for the last twenty years has run over into a sort of society for ethical culture, and the ethical culture has resolved itself in an organization to prevent dulness. When I go to church nowadays I expect to be amused or entertained. Sometimes the preacher diverts me by telling me about the Holy Land, sometimes he tries slides and magic lanterns, or he discusses the questions of the day, the labor problem, etc.; but I think slides have the popular preference."

Dolly's rider drew out her deadliest weapon—others of her sex have employed it before.

"Oh, if you are going to be irreverent—"

"Catholicism may not appeal to you or me," said D., taking no notice, "but for people who must get their living by physical labor and have not time nor inclination for speculation, or for people who are tired

of their own judgments and willing to trust to somebody who will take the responsibility for them, Catholicism is the final refuge.

"I think it is Miss Edwards who says the primitive man must have a fetish, the fellaheen of all countries demand a veiled Isis. They revere mystery, when they understand they can be neither awed nor terrified. What was that about the scarlet woman reigning on the Connecticut hills? There *is* a subtle red tinge over things—see how it has changed since last week."

Sure enough, the yellowish-green tint that since early last spring had prevailed over the meadows and fields had deepened to a reddish glow.

The sun, shining through low white clouds, looked like a red midsummer flower. The grass had a rosy hue, clover-fields mixed with sorrel in full bloom or purple-red geranium. The white and yellow flowers in the little gardens on the highway had given place to red blossoms, red roses, red hollyhocks, smocks, and petunias. Other details caught the eye.

Lambskills, dogsbane, and other rich-

glowing flowers were tangled with the wild roses in the fence corners, red cattle were feeding in the fields. As long as green and yellow were the colors spring lingered. This glowing tint means summer — lusty, full-blooded, luxuriant.

"If this were France or Germany," said D., "you'd think it very picturesque."

On either side of the road were little market gardens, in which women and men were working; the latter were bareheaded, and generally wore bright-colored garments. One old woman, in a brilliant red petticoat, bending over in a cabbage-patch, might have been a study for a painter. There was a little white cottage set back from the cabbage-patch, in a garden of pink hollyhocks, and on the porch was a young lady in a white dress swinging in a hammock.

"Marmar," called the young lady to the old woman, "it's most time for you to come in and get supper."

The illusion vanished. No, they were not in France or Germany, but Irish-America.

"D.," said Dolly's rider, "the overflow of Ireland into America may have uprooted or rather choked out Puritanism; but perhaps

we owe some of the adaptability that makes Americans the most cosmopolitan of races to a people who have so much gayety, so much good-nature as well as caprice. You know it takes a lot of the feminine quality to make a character interesting, and the Irish more than any other supply that trait in our make-up. Think what we were for stiffness and reserve when we were all Puritan-English!"

"I don't know that we mayn't admit, for sake of conversation," said D., "that the want of tact we complain of in English people is a lack of feminine quality; but you know what I think of tact."

"I'm not going to be rude and tell you you have it," said Dolly's rider. "If you want to be all masculine or all English you're welcome. At least, they have none of the effusiveness of The Sex. Do you remember the officer we met up the Nile? He had served under Gordon and idolized him. Talking about his untimely death, he said, 'I can tell you this: when I heard he had been murdered I was *cross*.' And the woman who recommended the soup to her husband at an American dinner-party as 'not

half so nasty as it looked,' and the lover who proposed to a girl by saying, 'I shouldn't mind our getting married, should you?' I suppose that's the reason so many Englishmen marry American women—they want a female person; and also why so few English women marry American men—they do *not* want a female person."

"I suppose there is really no limit to what a person may suppose," said D. "But when people begin to theorize as to why anybody ever marries anybody else they tie themselves to the tail of a kite. All the theories ever advanced about marriage any way are not worth a row of pins."

"Oh, if you're going to talk slang as well as those dreadful revolutionary sentiments I shall go home," said Dolly's rider, turning the horse's head towards Hartford.

D. gave the bay a cut and caught up with them.

"Slang! Ah, my Lady Philistina," he said, with triumph in his voice, "I feel like Mr. Grant White when the English duchess corrected him in the same imperious manner for the same 'Americanism,' as she supposed. Do you not mind you of the passage

in the sad scene in "Richard II." in which the Queen, apprehensive of her coming woes, says:

> "'But stay, here come the gardeners;
> Let us step into the shadow of the trees.
> My wretchedness *unto a row of pins*
> They'll talk of state.'"

For the first and only time during their horseback rides it is the duty of the scribe to put on record that D. had the last word. Even Dolly's rider must perforce yield to Shakespeare, but her chagrin lasted into the sunset. The hills in the west had been darkening for an hour or more, and all at once they became a deep indigo blue, and defined themselves into mountains. A little while ago the horseback riders had taken them for clouds. The sun sank in a round red ball, the after-glow followed soon, a bright scarlet that set on fire two small white clouds on the horizon; they looked like little burning castles with the light streaming through the windows, and as the conflagration spread they tumbled into the flames. The western sky was a purple waste of sea when they saw it from their own woods.

VI

THE air was cleared by the thunder-storms and rains, but scarcely cooled. The damp summer has kept the leaves fresh and green and luxuriant. One can ride ten miles in any direction around Hartford and not go out of the shade for more than five minutes at a stretch, but trees and rain are both down in D.'s books as nuisances. The rain—well, there is no excuse for rain, he says, except that it is necessary, like death or life or any other discipline; it insures some sort of vegetation, to be sure, but that doesn't save many a harsh landscape from being unattractive.

"Haven't I told you," he announces in his most dictatorial tone, "that the high plateaus of New Mexico and Arizona have everything that the rainy wilderness lacks —sunshine, Heaven's own air, immense breadth of horizon, color, and infinite beauty of outline? What need of rain when

science can regulate all the moisture we need? For my part I want to live in a country where the hose and I can make our own vegetation. I like the unlimited freedom of a treeless, rainless land, its infinite expansion, its floods of light, its waves of color, the translucent atmosphere that aids the imagination to create what it will. When you get to the green fields and the trees you know all about it, however beautiful; it has the effect of a familiar tune, a touch of the commonplace, and if you are not an ignoramus you must be aware that trees and rain do most of the mischief in the way of creating disease. Where do the germs of consumption wither and die? In a treeless desert. Where do they germinate? In a New England farm-house, embedded in sylvan shades."

"D.," said Dolly's rider, "if you had the making of it you'd manufacture a much better world than the one we have, wouldn't you? Don't be modest, say what you really think."

"I, at least, having known the failures in this one, would try to profit by experience," said D., thoughtfully. "I have never seen

a farmer who was satisfied with his crops. Every man insists he has had less rain than his neighbor, or more, if rain is not needed. A seasonable or a reasonable rain is the most difficult thing the tiller of the soil ever has to acknowledge to."

"You couldn't have these elms in your desert, D.," said Dolly's rider, "and you couldn't be without them."

They were going to Newington along the lovely, shady road that stretches from Parkville to that pretty village. A succession of splendid elms, as large as the largest oaks, and spreading dense green branches overhead marks the way. Up there in the leafy columns the wood-thrushes were singing; their notes, falling on the still, hot air, sounded like the jangling of keys on a steel bar.

We talk about the sterility of the New England soil, and it is often stony and unfruitful near the surface, but that outer covering, hard and unyielding, is no more a proof of barrenness than manners are a proof of morals. The roots of the elms work their way into the dark recesses of the earth. What depth of richness do they find there! What strength and nourishment! And as

the seasons pass, and the stripling grows into the tree, and the roots spread and enlarge, as the branches stretch forth great limbs, how the warm, rich soil gives up its treasures. What secret springs water it! What rich juices feed it! The difficulty, beloved, is not with our New England. It is with us who do not dig down deep enough to find its treasures.

"I would not get rid of these elms in this landscape and under these conditions," said D., in his most fair-minded manner. "They do very well for trees, but it's the conditions I object to. Set a man down in a desert of perpetual sunshine and no water, except what he brings in a trough from a distant mountain, and he can regulate his life. He can have potatoes and strawberries and grass in the same garden. He can even have a garden-party when he's a mind to, without insuring a storm, if there ever was a man with a mind who wanted a garden-party. He is independent in a word. But what sort of independence is this of mine that the first cloud that floats along the horizon has it in its power to drench me to my skin and lay me up with rheuma-

tism? Why, I spend half my life looking at the barometer. I'm always waiting to be interfered with. There is no such tyrant as weather, and no matter how whimsical it is they will call it nature. It would be a mighty different nature if I and a watering-pot had the regulating of it."

There comes a time when the most timid of mortals is constrained to give testimony.

"D.," said Dolly's rider, indignantly, "I don't believe if you had your way you'd do a bit better than Providence. As for independence, I'm sure you wouldn't know what to do with it. I won't discuss your attitude on important subjects, but just in the matter of your household and your dress. You always want to do and to look exactly like every other man. You all imitate each other to the detail of the tie of a cravat or the size of a walking-cane, and go on disfiguring yourself with the most hideous costume ever invented, because if you revolted in any particular you'd look different from the rest. As for matters in daily life we'd be cooking our food in leaves in a hollow in the ground if women had waited for men to buy cooking stoves, and be sitting on our

hands if it were left to you to get new parlor furniture. If a true history of the world were ever written we'd find out who instigated all the great movements. To be sure, and that's the pathetic part of it, women are always the power *behind* the throne."

"It is not denied that you are mischief-makers," said D., "and there is a legend that when the tempted one said to Satan, 'Get thee behind me,' the devil obeyed, taking the form of an enticing female. Hence, you see, the term you just now used. I admit we are not as eccentric as women, we don't wear *outré* clothes or make ourselves conspicuous in dress or manner of living, because we have a sense of humor which warns us of our liability to be ridiculous. Women as a general thing are lacking in humor. The first man who made his appearance looking like a balloon or with a hump on his back would have been laughed out of his hoop-skirt and his tournure. But you saw only the novelty, not the absurdity, and went to imitating them."

"D.," said Dolly's rider, "statements are not arguments; women *do* possess humor.

I could quote Miss Austen and George Eliot—"

"No, no," said D., "don't quote. Quotations spoil the look of a sentence. When I say women are lacking in humor and you remind me of Miss Austen and George Eliot, you condemn your cause by making them an exception to the general rule. When you say men lack humor, I don't refute you by naming Shakespeare. You're like the English official who defended the Egyptian character. I said all Arabs lied, and he indignantly replied he knew three who were absolutely truthful."

There is one advantage horseback riding has over other modes of locomotion. It is possible to put an end to a conversation by riding ahead. Dolly's rider turned from the main road into a rocky, bushy field that lay between two cultivated farms, a sort of hollow basin to catch the sunbeams that streamed lavishly into it. The ground was dotted over with patches of feathery, barren grass, barberry bushes and creeping juniper, scrub oaks and slim young tulip-trees, with silver sycamores. Wild roses and indigo-weed made splashes of color on

the green, and "love vine," tangled in and out the dusk of the leaves, webs of spun sunshine. Great gray bowlders sprawled in the thickets, looking like Brobdingnagian lizards of changing hues, as the sunlight flickered on their gray backs. In the crevices of the rocks, blossoming sweetbrier straggled. This flower has an innocent perfume that reminds one of the primitive affections. They looked in vain for anything useful in this pleasant place, but not even blackberries ripened there, nor wild grapes that grew on neighboring fences and scented the air.

In thrifty New England no field lies fallow or overrun with useless weeds without an effort to make it do its part in the labor of life. The horseback people knew this field had been tilled and sown and finally abandoned in despair, but none the less was it a feature in the landscape. Now the rainbow is not utilitarian; no painter ever dipped his brush in the vermilion of the sunset, nor seraph on lightest wing so much as poised in his flight on the stately battlements that guard the horizon. If Nature paints the heavens day after day with ships

that sail on fabled waters, castles that no man inhabits, colors that vanish as we gaze, lights that flame and die; if all the sky is a splendid spectacle exhibited not to instruct but to please, not that men or angels may dwell in those fair cities, but simply to delight the eyes that behold them, perhaps we who, when we at our best would make our earth a pattern of the heavens, should not lament that a few acres now and then resist the ploughshare and the tilling, and instead of grain bring forth only bright-hued flowers whose colors ape those fleeting, transient ones that die nightly in the sky.

Just within the precincts of Newington they came upon a fine house and grounds. This house is painted a bright red, there are vines about the piazza, a green lawn, a tennis court, a little back from the house is a stable with a smart weathercock on top. The horseback people were very much interested, and stopped a man who was hoeing in the next field to ask who lived there, not that the name would have given the slightest amount of information, for the person who told them might have been

mistaken or lied, but it is a peculiarity of human nature to put this sort of question.

"Why, Mr. —— lives there," said the man. "I guess everybody in these parts knows him, he's the richest man in Newington."

He spoke with a sort of personal pride in his wealthy townsman's existence.

"I wonder why he doesn't move to Hartford," said Dolly's rider. "I should think anybody who had such a nice house and was able to keep it up in so much style would want to come to a city."

D. smiled. "He'd be a great fool if he did. He'd not be the richest man in Hartford by a long sight, nor would you and I be stopping people at their work to ask his name, nor would working people answer with such an air of friendly participation in his glory. He is a wise man who is content to be the principal personage in his community, wherever that community may be."

VII

THE stable boy who brought Worchester to —— Street for Philistina to try him would have had them believe that the horse had had an adventurous career. He came from Kentucky and had enjoyed fame and honor. Indeed, from what the stable boy retailed, if Worchester could talk he would probably have said with Ulysses:

> "Much have I seen and known.
> Cities of men and manners,
> Climates, councils, governments,
> Myself not least, but honored of them all."

But also like Ulysses he seemed to have no craving to tell what he had seen and known. There is not a trace of vanity—that solvent of reticence—in his steady-going gait, and not the smallest boastfulness or ostentation; he is a long, tall, sorrel horse, and of a cool and resolute temper.

"How do you like him, Philistina?"

asked D. They had gone the length of Washington Street and a mile or two down the country road on the right before he asked this question. D. was riding a new horse himself, and Philistina had been asking him what he thought of it every five minutes since he had mounted it. This little incident is related to show the difference between the masculine and the female mind.

"Well, he isn't Dolly," said Philistina. "And, in fact, he isn't a female. Dolly has a thousand capricious ways. She jumps at holes in the road; she runs when she is in danger of being outstripped; she trembles with excitement; and she gets depressed when she realizes that she is far from home. But she knows your mood by instinct; she is sympathetic, sensitive, interesting. Now Worchester—well, D., Worchester is like all male creation. He goes right along the regular road, he gallops if it is a smooth piece, and he walks when it is rough. Just now when I wanted—for no particular reason—to ride on the other side of the way, he gave his head such a contemptuous shake that I expected him every minute to say, 'Don't be silly, running off at a

tangent, keep to the beaten track.' Now Dolly would have gone over and not only enjoyed the variation but understood it. The truth is, it's a question of sex. It's his penetration in seeing this sort of thing that delights me in Howells. Don't you remember in *The Quality of Mercy*, when Mrs. Hillery is warning Louise against Maxwell, who had been brought up in another class of society, and had other ideas and another social code, she says, 'He'd be *different* enough, merely being a man.'"

D. smiled. "Her remonstrance, I recollect, had very little effect. Different as they were, Louise preferred him to the most faithful reproduction of herself. I do not know why it is, Philistina, but this cool, bright day makes me melancholy. I say I do not know, and yet I do know; it is its autumnal character. It is useless to tell me that it is the beginning of July. Such days as these are sent to make us remember that frost and blight are coming, the leaves must change and fall, and ice and snow cover the earth. Look at the grass with the yellow tinge, and that bush with the leaves turning crimson. Feel this sweet cool

wind, not cold enough to stir the blood, but like the touch of a ghost's fingers. Hear the birds in the copse—every note is reminiscent. Now nobody ever feels melancholy in hot weather. We grumble and are uncomfortable, but the very sense of discomfort gives a feeling of permanence and continuance. We are hot and we always shall be hot. It takes all our time to exist. We have no prescience for to-morrow except to hope it will come because to-day is pretty disagreeable. But an afternoon like this, when earth and sky and air are bathed in beauty and peace, is also full of warning voices.

> 'Hence in a season of calm weather,
> Though inward far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> That brought us hither.'

That's life—you can't get any present out of it. You've always got something to remind you of where you came from or where you're going to. What I want is a now, and leisure to enjoy it. There is no pleasure to me in any situation where I am reminded that it is a passing pleasure. The only person with whom I ever found my-

self in full sympathy in this hatred of change and this content with the present is a man the Parson was telling me about. He was crippled and deaf and half blind, and the Parson, after dilating on the joys of heaven, asked him if he didn't want to go there. 'No,' he said, stoutly. 'I don't; I know what I got.' The hint of autumn in this air is just as melancholy to me as the flush of fever in a consumptive's cheek. Death is not here to-day, but he is coming—surely—for see where he has set his sign."

"D.," said Philistina, "it may all be true that you have said, except that the bird songs are reminiscent. If you knew about ornithology you'd know that a bird's song is an anticipation, and expresses happiness or joy only, except when the male bird has lost his mate; then he sings for a few days, but whether to make the other birds know he is in a position to be consoled, or to try to bring her back, you'll have to guess from your knowledge of the male nature. For me the very sense of its transitoriness gives this perfect day an added charm. What are the things we care for but the things that are rare, and, above all, that we have not

got? You see that in all the poetry. In northern countries they sing about the date-palm and the orange-trees, and the fragrant breath of summer, and in the East it's all about water and shade. There's hardly a poetical image in the Bible that hasn't got something about running waters and shady rills; whenever they wanted to boast about their country, a desire to which the Old Testament writers yielded rather often, you know, they dilated on the brooks and the clear streams and the fountains. Now we, who are used to a plenty of water, don't compare our lady loves to a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, as Solomon did."

"I wonder what one of those Old Testament Jews, who has never been beyond Jordan in his life, would say," said D., "if he could be transported to this green lane after all his bragging about his mud holes and his land of milk and honey, two-thirds of which is a desert of limestone rocks and ledges, whitish-gray glaring in the sun, the stones wasted by age, relieved with little scrubby trees, unrejoiced by a single blade of grass, and barren to the extent that the most industrious bird couldn't collect in

its length and breadth enough material to make a nest. Would he burst into a sublime canticle at the sight of this luxuriant verdure, or be angry because there are places more beautiful than Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth? One of the queer things in this world is the effect Palestine has on ministers of the gospel. They come, many of them, from cold countries, and they are fascinated with the idea of a land they have Scriptural authority for believing is a land of vines and olives and palms, of soft skies, and no danger of throat trouble. Of course they pitch their tents, like the rest of us, amid Moslem squalor, barrenness, and within the circuit of icy winds. But there is this to be said for them, they never betray their disillusion about the Brook Cherith, or the site of Jericho, or the ashy soil on which the Jews looked from the mountains of Moab, and wept when they remembered Zion. The faith in the desirability of Palestine will never die out as long as clergymen go there and have it to preach about from the time they return till their retirement."

With that barren land in mind, it did

seem a pleasant country when they turned into the New Haven turnpike, a white road bordered by trees. The landscape gradually closed about them, they heard the cattle ripping off the lush grass in the fields, and the rattle of the mowing-machine.

Now and again they came to little pools where small fish leaped, rippling on the surface in ever widening circles; the mirror of the water was broken by tall knots of irises and bullrushes or a floating layer of lily leaves. The sunlight, as it fell upon the ferns and the grasses of the slopes, blended their several tints of lilac, russet, red, yellow, and the varied greens into a harmonious radiance. On the wooded slope the glossy bronze-red leaves of the beech showed bravely against the green of the chestnuts and their hanging white sprays. Spenser hit on an apt phrase when he called this muscular, stalwart tree "the warlike beech."

They met a turtle in the road, his back covered with the fragments of green leaves blown off in yesterday's storm. He was walking along seemingly indifferent to the loveliness of the day and the scenery till the

sight or the sound of the horseback riders made him pause and draw in his head. D. took this for a sign that he did not admire their appearance, and wanted to get down and in vengeance mark his back with the date 10,000 B.C., and so upset the idea of the Biblical chronology, but was deterred by the presence of two little boys sitting on the fence, innocent of latter-day scepticism and stockings. He said the mud-turtle reminded him of a horse he once rode going down to Jericho, whose prototype was the Emperor Honorius, whom Gibbon described as without passions and therefore without talents.

Of birds and flowers they noted little change since last week, except that the meadow-lilies had grown to maturity, and they came upon stately clumps of wood-lilies growing between the stumps of fallen trees. The ferns were big and lusty, with red seeds powdering the ridge of the fronds, and corn poppies, coreopsis, and red flags flaunting their freckled faces, grew on the road-side. Of birds, the valley-thrush sang its simple flute-like song, but the robbins had lost their pure piercing notes and sputtered

like hoarse stammerers. The care of the young of any species leaves little room for the practice of the fine arts—the woods are full of young fledglings their parents are scolding into the mystery of how to fly. The heat and blaze of midsummer also silence many of our birds.

They turned out of the New Haven Road at a sort of fork, skirted the edge of a deep wood on the hill-side, and rode along a path too narrow for two to go—abreast, a cool dim path as restful as solitude.

Suddenly D. stopped and parted the branches of a spreading oak. They looked down into a green basin framed in blue. In the centre Hartford lay; they saw the gleam of the white and red houses, and the tall church-spires, and the gold dome of the capitol. A dark and glossy background of green spread to the foot of the mountains that seemed to float down in billowy waves to meet it. That stretch of blue, as penetrating as a ray of light flashed in a dark room, seemed to liberate them from earth. The river meadows looking towards the light glowed or darkened as the clouds floating over them separated in flaming masses,

or grew black in heavy blocks. From the hill they saw their great shadows pass slowly over the top of the green forest.

"If we had any such historical association this would be as beautiful as a view of Rome from the Villa D'Este," said Philistina.

D. turned right about in a manner which would have been agitating to Dolly, but was received by Worchester with phlegmatic indifference as all being in a day's work.

"No historical association, indeed! Will you tell me why the Pequot War and Captain John Mason, of Windsor, are not as much matters of history as the fights between the Sabines and the Romans? Or these paths, trod by the men who originated this government of the people, by the people, for the people, are not as sacred as the walks traversed by Cicero? There is one point of resemblance, however, I grant you, which makes the view of Hartford as interesting as that of Rome. Both are drained into their own rivers. Let us go home."

VIII

PARDON my whispering, reader, but the habit has taken fast hold. Philistina has been buying a horse, and the affair has been conducted with so much secrecy and so much diplomacy that loud speech has not been indulged in during the negotiation.

The first thing one has to learn when one goes into the horse business is to assume an air of indifference. No matter if horseback riding is the one essential to your health, no matter if your ambition to ride or love of the exercise renders the thought of a horseless existence insupportable, conceal your real emotion. What you have got to fight in the man who sells you your horse is a cool reluctance to enter into business relations with you. He'd like to have you have the horse. He likes you, likes the way you talk, likes your looks. If he was not a plain man and no flatterer he'd say he'd

rather you have the horse than anybody he ever knew on so short an acquaintance. But there's a little matter between him and a lady over to Willimantic. She's that set on the horse that he'd hardly take the responsibility of disappointing her. But then she hasn't got the figure for it. You've got to have a fine, straight figure to look well on a horse, and the Willimantic lady—well, if a man could be excused for plain speech, is a trifle stout, and he has to own he likes a good horse to have a—well, a handsome appearing rider. Now if that Willimantic lady *could* be satisfied— Oh, Philistina, with what weapons will you fight such subtle, subtle flattery!

The fact is, all horse sales are conducted in Oriental fashion. No hurry, plenty of graceful compliments, and cool indifference on both sides.

Philistina's horse was finally chosen on account of its simple and open past, and its almost haughty acknowledgment of a dearth of social pretension.

Almost every horse that is for sale is a blooded horse from Kentucky, and has taken the prize at the Illinois State fair.

If he balks, it is insisted that balking is an aristocratic tendency. Does he shy, it is a direct inheritance from his great-grandfather, the famous racer. Run—that's the blood. His very faults, like those of Emerson's good man, illustrated by the wounded oyster who mended his shell with pearl, work to his advantage. His exaggerated head occasions the same sort of pride as the Hapsburg lips; his stocky legs, as the Guelf peculiarity of being short and fat, or of the Dobson family's light hair and eyes. If he "picks his feet," or shies or bucks, the dealer has the same impartial air of sweet reasonableness in his reply: "I never said he was a rocking-chair, and I disown him to be a Texas mustang. He is a blooded Kentucky horse, and he had the medal at the Illinois State fair."

"Bring me a mustang," at last cried Philistina, with angry insistence, goaded to this act by the same thing that has made her rejoice in her peasant forefathers when people bragged of the gout, and the mustang was forthcoming and the bargain completed.

Well, now that the long struggle is over,

what of it? He is safe and sound in the stable. Sound?—stay—

There is a freemasonry between horse people. Philistina found this out when, seeing an advertisement in a paper, she went to a neighboring city to look at a horse. The horse proved to be blind of an eye. She had provided herself with an adviser in the person of another horseman, who was to judge of defects, and when she turned to him to corroborate her statement that a missing eye was an awkward blemish, what was her surprise to hear from her own lawyer, "Why, I can't say, marm, as I look at it that way. Horses—blooded horses, which ain't rocking-chairs nor yet mustangs, are always shying at something in the road, and if he is off of an eye, he ain't got but one side to shy from."

When, therefore, the horse she finally selected, fresh from the Texas plains, was really hers, she looked with gratification at the long line of stablemen from half a mile around, who filed into the stable to see the new purchase, and, of course, to praise it. But circumstances were changed. Every livery-stable owner, every shock-headed

groom had his word. The acumen with which defects were detected showed merciless if penetrating gaze.

Like all shallow criticism and would-be popular criticism, there was no delicate and discriminating praise. It is much easier to be vulgarly smart and ill-natured than generous and just, thought Philistina when it had been suggested that his ankles were a trifle swelled and there was a smallish lump on his knee, and his back was a "leetle round for a saddle." What a pity that more substantial comfort cannot be extracted from discriminating observation.

But to horse.

Philistina had been brought up in a pious if humble way. She had been taught from youth that while beauty is a fading flower, homeliness is guaranteed to last a lifetime, Therefore, as she bought her horse for his staying capacities, she avoided the snare of good looks. The Texas free-lance had lately been in distressed circumstances, and the red and white hairs on his mottled body were so worn that when Philistina demanded a name for him D.'s immediate response "Esau" looked like an inspiration. As has

been remarked, Philistina bought Esau on account of his democratic birth; the only record of who he is and whence he came is branded in huge letters on his side. "The cowboys got really mortified," explained D., "because they kept hanging men for stealing their own horses; so they reorganized the brands, and not only required owners to put their initial but their initials on." Esau's master, according to this, must have been a Spanish hidalgo, for his name stretches the length of his body. For the rest, it may be said that he has the adaptability of the American character. He settled himself — he, the denizen of the prairie, the product of the steppes—in his new habitation, a New England stable, with a calmness that commanded admiration. Fear does not appear to enter his breast, nor is he daunted by captivity. He seems, indeed, to be of the school of ascetic Brahmins, and apparently to regard fate as invincible.

"We'll take him out after dinner for the first time," said D. "It's so hot he'll not be noticed, anyway, but it's just as well to have the friendly cover of night."

This remark is noted because it is one of

D.'s boasts that he is indifferent to public opinion, but the truth is he is one of those people who has so persistently condemned certain weaknesses in others that he has acquired the reputation of freedom from these weaknesses, and with freedom, liberty to indulge in them. In consideration of his feelings, therefore, Philistina turned into a side street and made in the direction of Bloomfield.

The patient souls who have so long followed the horseback riders will follow them again, perhaps, in the cool of evening. The western sky was amber, and the far retreated thunder-clouds hung low in the north, emitting quick flashes which revealed their forms. They rode by Little River, whose smooth surface reflected two shades of light, one from the water, the other from the lily pads which bordered it on both sides. The dew was falling, and the smell of new-mown hay scented the air. The little lane, bordered by trees, looked like the entrance of a moonlit causeway where the light was reflected from the glistening leaves and the liquid shade beneath bounded and narrowed the road. They heard the bull-

frogs down in the meadow trumpeting with a dull, thumping sound, and the whinny of a horse in a distant pasture, and the barking of dogs. With these noises were mingled—subordinating them by its persistence—the gurgle of unwearied water. Things looked large and out of proportion in the half-moonlight. The gray rocks across the road might have been sleeping elephants. Esau's small, thin figure assumed gigantic proportions. Philistina trembled when she thought of what a fall she'd get should he take a notion to throw her at that moment when he was taller than Worchester with his head in the air.

And his gait?

Even thus early in their acquaintance Philistina was able to glory in his ambition and that quality which is best described in the popular tongue as "sand."

Unlike Shelley at Naples, who would "lie down like a tired child and weep away this life of care," he held up his Hapsburg lip and trotted on. With no such self-pity as wrung from Burns the cry,

> "Thou art a galling load
> Along a rough, a weary road
> To wretches such as I;"

did he skirt nimbly the outskirts of Asylum Avenue, face the unfamiliar bicycle, and regard with unabashed front the mysterious street-car. In his code of manners it is evidently bad form to be surprised.

"D.," said Philistina, in that dispassionate tone she has acquired from her associates of the stable-yard, "Esau looks like a donkey and he runs like one. But I am going to apply your wisdom, an act which you have left to me to do. What we look like really does not signify so we are comfortable and happy. People who like me now will like me just as much, though on Esau's back I do present a somewhat absurd appearance. Those who do not like me will be softened to me by my insignificance. For a long time I wore strings to my bonnets and high collars in hot weather, and I suffered many other discomforts in cold, for the sake of appearing well. I do not think anybody ever cared a straw about these sacrifices, or that I ever gained or lost a friend by them. I like Esau, and I am going to ride him in the broad light of day."

"Philistina," said D., "you ought to be the heroine of a novel. I am sure you'd be

immensely popular. You know people like renunciation—that is, they like to see it in other people, and you always have the air of having arrived to your great height of moral excellence by self-sacrifice. I saw you liked that little beast, or, rather, I saw that you had made up your mind to think you liked him, because he was the choice of your unassisted judgment; but I was wondering how you were going to make something magnificent out of it."

"D.," said Philistina, "if I were a man I would not employ sarcasm against a woman. Besides, it deceives nobody. Those who are wittiest at our expense are most infatuated about us."

D. took a short cut for —— Street.

"Summer evenings' sights and sounds make me lonesome," he said, "and homesick, even though we are only a mile off. You are always talking of what you would do if you were a man, but if men did any of the things women think they would do in their places, this world would be even more impossible than it is now."

IX

SAU is afraid of chickens. Nay, do not start, reader, nor permit contemptuous scorn of his timidity to turn your heart against this stranger in your midst. Rather let the phenomenon set you to thinking. If an ignorant peasant in a remote Italian village can divine from a bit of wood-carving not larger than your two hands the design of the altar screen and stalls of the Ovieto Cathedral, and from that hint restore the elaborate work of a by-gone age in its entirety, surely you, from the simple fact that the domestic hen has it in her power to agitate and even terrify a horse fourteen and a half hands high, may reconstruct his past.

And while we are about it, here are other confidences. Esau is afraid of chickens and of churches, and of his own spare figure and elongated head, when he sees them in a pool of water.

As the clergymen say, let us reason together; when we set out to unravel a mystery let us seize the first thread and hold on to it.

Why is he afraid of hens, churches, and his own not unusual personality?

Because they are strange to him.

What part of the world could he have dwelt in that such commonplace objects should strike terror to his heart?

I confess, reader, that I am making a mystery where there is no mystery, again following the example of my betters. We all know Esau is a Texas mustang, but these traits, so *naïvely* exhibited, give us the same pleasure when we recognize them that a whist-player with the odd trick to his credit derives in talking over the game. There are no chickens except prairie-chickens, who are not chickens, on the Texas prairie; there are no churches there to cast long shadows on the ground, and in that broad expanse no shallow pools in which Esau might have beheld and fallen in love with his own features. If there were not already enough of pathos in life we might afford to linger over this little tragedy and

drop a tear. I said Esau was afraid of himself. Was it fear alone? May it not have been grief, disappointment, wounded vanity as well? Who knows but that until that view of his spare form yesterday afternoon he had not cherished the illusion that he was an Adonis among horses—that he may not have plumed himself on his imaginary grace and beauty, comparing his charms with those of other steeds and secretly rejoicing in his own superior merits?

Well, whatever his theories in the past the mirror has done its work of disillusion. I do not know what effect it will have upon his character. Sadness rather than bitterness will probably fall upon his life, for Esau has a gentle heart, but in making you this confidence concerning him I do not fear that I have done amiss. None of us can ever forget the moment when the veil was lifted in our own lives and we saw ourselves for the first time as we really are. In that hour of self-revelation our little assumptions of superiority, our small vanities were not only exhibited with unsparing candor, but, as we afterwards learn to be-

lieve, with exaggerated distinctness. The impression remains clear-cut and vivid in our consciousness, so vivid that I feel I need no more apologize for Esau's personal defects, now that he is conscious of them and deplores them. We have all suffered the same disillusioning process, and we are united to him by the tie of sympathy.

Philistina has been riding alone; it would not have been alone if she had ridden Dolly. There are people who do not talk who are very pleasantly felt, but Esau is not responsive. She rode towards Farmington yesterday afternoon, and after she was remote from cities and men she turned into a country road lined on either side with golden-rod. It was their first sight of this autumnal flower, this signal of the going of summer, and Philistina drew rein and looked at it with a melancholy interest, and so pervaded was she with sadness at the thought (borrowed from D.'s note-book) of how small a part of time they share who are so wondrous bright and fair that she sighed aloud. Esau, who the moment his pace was slackened began to eat grass, looked up, and though I will not affirm

that he said anything, his glance of inquiry was so plainly, "What did you do that for?" that Philistina realized his sex and went to explaining.

"I don't really care about golden-rod, Esau," she said. "I consider it a very much over-praised flower. It has a disagreeable odor in the first place, and that yellow green never appealed to me. I sentimentalized about it because all the artists and the poets make it a subject of romance. When I get time, Esau, I am going to write an essay on the value of individual opinion, which will —will probably occasion the writing of other essays to refute me. That is really all the influence one has in essay writing nowadays. We are very odd creatures, we mortals, and not very different from the people who hunted the Snark or went off to sea with the Teapot and The Quangle Wangle. We look at a nickel before taking it or passing it lest it prove false, but we never dream of doing so much by our opinions, but accept them and pass them on, false or true, as may happen. There is nothing more astonishing than the way we let other people decide whether a thing is to us beau-

tiful or unsightly. Now, there is no beauty except a subjective beauty, just as there is no reasoning a man into being good except by giving him a sense within himself of the beauty of goodness. These things rest in our own souls, the standard is set within ourselves."

Did Esau understand or care? If he did not, Philistina was not worse off than other preachers to any Sunday morning audience.

An old tar would have described yesterday as "quiet weather;" the sky wrapped itself in masses of woolly white clouds, the blue line of the hills as evening came on grew to beaten steel, and where a band of purple sank into a rosy mist, a thin gray veil was overspread and tempered the color to a misty harmony. Hartford was buried down there in the hollow of the green trees. Philistina looked back, and looking back she also looked into the coming years. So shall we one day behold life, as if we stood upon a high hill and it was a little village below where we had rested a while. And from the hill we can see the paths and turns, the stretch of sun, the steep ascent, the pleasant valley. What was obscure, is clear

and plain, now we view it from a height. And the village which, small as it was, was yet so large that we were lost in it, unknown and undesired, what a little place to work and puzzle in! No wonder it was meant just for a station of a day now we have come to this—to this!

They turned into the woods, and suddenly the silence of the fields was broken by the crickets singing in the grass. They made as much noise as a colony of blackbirds. The clear ring in their creak tells just as plainly as the golden-rod that we are on the heels of autumn.

Philistina thought until she began these horseback rides that she knew something of wild flowers, but every day she brings back an unfamiliar species, which she and the botany books are set to the task of naming.

Yesterday she found butter-and-eggs, toad-flax, johnswort, prunella, cool in the grass, snake-mouthed arethusa, and countless varieties of asters. Seeing them growing in such grace and beauty and a certain fragile delicacy and loveliness in the fields, made her long to take them home, and she won-

dered why people cultivated flowers when every meadow and fence corner yield grasses and blossoms that for form and color (that is, a certain tender, spiritual quality of hue) put the greenhouse and garden plants to shame. She found out why when she had got them arranged in vases. All the tender blues and lavenders faded, the slender grasses drooped, the green things paled and withered. You can no more expect a mass of field flowers to adapt themselves to a Sevres vase than you can expect Pocahontas to look beautiful in a London gown. Take things from their native environment and you rob them of their charm. In fact, environment is so much an element of beauty that they cannot be judged apart. Who would have the "Venus of Milo" in her living-room? It is not so, however, with a mental or a moral quality, which is always independently beautiful and desirable. Love nature as we will, in matters like these we see how infinitely higher is the spiritual world.

When they came out of the wood they met a young girl walking with a person who, in their romantic mood, Esau and

Philistina decided must be her young man. She was a slight, dark girl, and she had on a white dress. At the fence corner she stopped and gathered a bunch of golden-rod and pinned it on her shoulder. The gold of the flower brought out the warmth and richness of her dark cheek. It glowed to beauty. I don't suppose she gave herself a thought about the responsibility of this act. How many women consider that on the slender thread of their personal attractions hangs the very existence of a human future. Philistina was reading Herbert Spencer the other day, and she came to the conclusion that the tie of a ribbon, the arrangement of a waving lock which has swayed the choice of a doubting gallant, is one of the most serious things in life, because that pinch of the curling-iron, or turn of the milliner's fingers gives a race to the world which otherwise never would have existed.

And was this solitary ride altogether enjoyable? At least, she thought her own thoughts and spoke her own words without contradiction or ridicule; but when a woman talks, and a man does not say anything,

she cannot be sure that his silence is all admiration. Esau may have been entirely disapproving had he the means to communicate his thoughts.

X

THESE horseback rides around Hartford were all very well, but they were really meant as a preparation for a journey D. and Philistina had long planned to take. When, finally, the day arrived, they started in fine feather, Esau leading the way. They had talked horse and horseback trip right along for two months, and had made plans and unmade them, and it is not complained that friends or neighbors were lacking in either sympathy or advice.

For many a day before they set out people used to come to see them and tell them where to go, and make out routes for them, and give them hints as to the care of their horses. If they had taken all the advice they got they'd have spent the first night at seven different places—namely, Farmington and Simsbury and Avon and New Hartford, Collinsville, Barkhamsted Light-house, and

Riverton. If they'd pleased everybody they'd have strapped their packs in front of the saddle, at the left side, the right, the back, and they'd have had a dozen styles of bags. They'd have fed Esau all the way from three to twelve quarts of oats a day, and washed his back at night with electric oil, hot-water, cold-water, alcohol, Pond's extract, whiskey-and-water, and Lubin's cologne.

If those people had taken all the warnings they got, they wouldn't have stirred outside their front door, or would have given themselves up for broken-necked, crippled, maimed; but if they had stayed at home they'd have had to encounter the counter-current of derision for missing such a good time because they didn't go. Friends —enemies maybe—told them August was *the* month for the trip, Berkshire *the* country to ride through on horseback.

Dear, dear, what a task to try to please everybody, everybody going different ways.

Like most people, they pleased themselves, and at eleven o'clock of a Wednesday morning they cantered out of Forest Street, all the sidewalk lined with neighbors and friends waving adieu.

Stay, no more than they, can the reader of this chronicle start off without delays.

Every arrangement had been completed the night before. There were three horses and three people to go: Diana, who was a city friend of theirs and Philistina's mentor, Philistina and D., Sunday, Esau, and Jack the Sailor.

Sunday is a New Yorker, a bob-tailed, high-stepping bay; Esau has already occupied space in these pages; Jack is an aristocratic and handsome saddle-horse. D. and Philistina bought their beasts for economy's sake, expecting to make the expenses of the trip in reselling them. The people they bought them from advised them in the most disinterested manner to take this far-sighted policy.

They got up long before day: this was to please the neighbors, who told them they must start before it got hot, but it is one thing to get ready and another to be ready. The women were all dressed, bonneted and gloved, and trembling with excitement by six o'clock. Then they had to sit down while Diana read aloud Emerson on "Self Control" for Philistina's discipline.

It was on account of D. He had been spurring up everybody within a radius of five miles to get ready, whether they were going or not, and prognosticating that two women would never be able to leave the house till the day after they said they would, when suddenly, at the last moment, he discovered he had things to do.

He shut himself up in a room, admitting only male visitors, one at a time. He probably wrote the President's inaugural for him during these long hours; perhaps he learned the Meisterschaff system of speaking German, he had plenty of time to do both.

Day broke, boiled, sizzed, Philistina fretted, and Diana looked gratified. "They are all alike," she said; "all men are inconsistent and childish. Now, Philistina, I want you to be a woman."

"Dear me, Diana," said Philistina, "that's easy enough. I knew you were rather exacting, and I thought you expected me to be a man."

"A man, indeed!" said Diana, looking at her bracelet watch. "You don't imagine I'd take the responsibility of going on a horseback tour with two of them, do you?"

"But what do you suppose he is doing?" questioned Philistina.

"Doing? Why, trying on his clothes," said Diana, promptly. "People who know them—wives and mothers, you know—tell me when they shut themselves up that's what they are always doing. I'm glad, Philistina, you don't care what you look like."

Philistina moved a little uneasily. She had on a riding-skirt, a linen shirt, and a soft felt hat. It was a trying costume, but she had hoped it was becoming, as people generally do, no matter what liberties they take with their appearance.

"You look as if you cared enough for what you 'look like,'" she said, a little bitterly, for Diana wore one of the great Bon Ton's habits, and was very taut and elegant in her equestrian array, but she looked down and smiled with contemptuous indifference on her slim figure.

"I get myself into what they send me, and that's the end of it," she said. "Don't put on a veil, Philistina, it looks vain. Women used to do those affected things, but we know better now; and do keep in mind that you have got to be an example."

With counsels like these, the moments, sandwiched with philosophy, were whiled away. D. came down at eleven o'clock; they did mount, did start, and finally got on the road.

It is just as well to put on record here that bets on Esau, as the favorite, were large and universal. He was so plain, so unassuming, that he carried a certificate of good standing in his every attitude.

"The little fellow'll outlast the lot," were the last cheering words that echoed from the last neighbor's stable, as Philistina cantered out of sight of home amid parting directions.

It was a hot day, but the sun was veiled with a thin cloud of haze that hinted at coming drouth and dustiness rather than rain. The summer greenness, after they got into the country, was just beginning to change into russet, yellow, and scarlet tints. Holiday time had come to the growing plants. The tiny village of Avon was to be their first stopping-place for lunch. Esau led the way, for three horses cannot go abreast, and that bold spirit, incased in a small, unsightly frame, was Columbustian

in its pioneer qualities. The big horses' long walk was too much for him, but his unbroken single-foot put them in the rear. They got to Avon in two hours, lunched there, and started at about 4 P.M. for New Hartford.

A word about roads. The people in Avon are an intelligent and kindly race. They always vote the straight ticket, but they cannot tell the passing traveller how to get anywhere.

It was this way. New Hartford was the nearest stopping-place for the night, but they must avoid the railroad if possible, and the thing was to get a country path undisturbed by trains.

They went over to the store, where half a dozen men, middle-aged and aged, were settling the affairs of state by discussion, and asked a way to New Hartford that avoided the railroad.

"Well, you go up the road a piece," said one man, "and look at the sign-board, and then turn to the right and go two miles, and that brings you to the Devil's passway—two miles close to the track over the river on the other side."

"But we want to avoid that," said D., very slowly and calmly. "We want to get to New Hartford without riding longside the track."

"Then you go to the next village and turn to the right," said an aged man with a quid of tobacco in his mouth, "and go down a piece on the left, and you'll come to the Devil's passway, and you go along that two miles and then—"

"That's what I want to avoid," said D. He looked red and talked very loud, as if his auditor was deaf.

Philistina knew the signs and proposed to take a walk, but Diana opened her reticule and took out three small pellets.

"For violent excitement," she read the directions in a low but clear voice, "take one of No. 3. For increased ditto, threatening apoplexy, one of No. 7. You must give them to him, Philistina, they are a specific; but watch your chance. I despise tact, but that is the way we will have to begin."

Philistina nodded. Already she divined that it was best to agree to propositions if not to carrying them out.

A tall man with his beard cut away under

his chin, leaving mouth and cheeks bare, now took his feet from the topmost round of the porch where they had doubtless obstructed the view, and, without looking at D., remarked to his neighbor,

"He *might* go through Barkhamsted Light-house. It's six miles out of the way on an awful piece of road, but if he's a mind to get away from the cars that'll do it."

The individual addressed laughed.

"Barkhamsted Light-house 's clean out of the world," he said; "it's about the farthest place you ever got; but if he's hunting scenery, I guess he'll get it going over them hills."

"It looks to me as if you people were pretty good-natured," said D., "to let the railroad run longside your highway two miles, and the same highway be crossed three times by the track between here and New Hartford; it kills a lot of people and frightens a lot of horses; but as you could help it if you wanted to, I suppose it's all right."

This sarcastic comment was made after they had mounted their horses, for the Avon people are doubtless like the rest of the

world, they prefer their own inconveniences to other people's comforts, and there was a plenty of opportunity to make the same remark about the railroad before the horse-back party got through their trip.

There is no use in trying to make another person understand about that afternoon, for there really never was or never will be another just like it, though the same remark can be made about any afternoon in the year, for Nature never repeats herself; there will be a different setting of the clouds, darker or lighter shadows on the green slopes, a changing glory in the sky.

But it was nearing five o'clock, and no Barkhamsted Light-house in view. When we in our short-sightedness fret at little interruptions, we would do well to remember that most of the good things that happen to us come about through some accidental, perhaps unwelcome, circumstance. Philistina and Esau both wanted to drink, and, though D. and Diana were cross at having to stop, stop they did at a pretty brick house by the river-side, where there was a stone trough and a well-sweep and a pleasant-faced man digging potatoes in his garden.

"Do you know any way we can get to New Hartford without going through the Devil's passway?" asked Philistina, after he had given her a drink out of a cool gourd.

She knew that her persistent habit of asking questions was ill-bred and childish, but the individual who is unencumbered with a reputation for good sense or good manners has acquired liberty.

"We are going through Barkhamsted Light-house," said D., decisively. "Philistina, I wish you wouldn't—"

"You'll go six miles out of your way if you do," said the man, "and I can show you a way through Nigger Hill that's a chance better. There's a track to cross, and the freight trains — well, we can't count on when they won't come; but you'll have to cross tracks no matter *where* you go. That's a strange idea you've got about Barkhamsted Light-house."

"Six men at Avon told me," said D.

The man shook his head.

"Them town people," he said, contemptuously—but Philistina, wise in her day, did not even smile.

The new way proved very pleasant.

Nigger Hill, despite its unromantic name, is a picturesque ascent, and looking from its height there are strips of meadow-land and a line of blue hills, with stretches of pine and beech forest. They went well into the woods after that and began to climb. The sun shone in long rays of gold through the thick foliage, and the birds were chattering as if in consultation as to where to spend the winter. How glad the horseback riders were that they had done talking over plans to go away. The Farmington River ran swiftly in its rocky bed beneath; they saw it gleam through a thicket of young pitch-pines and white birches that grew from the hill-side to its banks, and above all the wood noises they heard its continuous murmur. It was like a human voice, and took away all sense of loneliness. I mean the loneliness that oppresses the heart and makes one feel the irresponsiveness of Nature. It is difficult in these days of scepticism to make any statement that will not be controverted, but I think the people who live by rivers are much more cheerful than those who dwell on mountain heights or in parts of the country distant

from flowing streams. There is a sense of companionship in the ripple of the waves and of communication with the world in the flow of the water, and the people who live by rivers are not remote from the busy scenes of life, for the river flowing to the sea bears the spirit of the dweller by its side upon its breast to the remotest shores.

"Now," said D., when they came to a great stone trough covered with moss and half buried in ferns, whose clear waters flowed from a thicket of sweet fern and fringed orchids, "aren't you sorry you and Esau took your drink down in the meadow instead of waiting for this?"

Philistina might have said if she had not taken her drink in the meadow D. would not have taken his here; but she chose a better way, both she and Esau drank again undisturbed by past libations.

"He is the toughest little fellow I know," said D., after a somewhat difficult ascent of the mountain, when they came in sight of New Hartford. Philistina smiled contentedly, "He could not be so plain for nothing," she said, with the wisdom of experience.

XI

THEY would have got to New Hartford hours before if it had not been for Esau's appetite. Whether he inherited the peculiarities of his great namesake or only imitated them I do not know; at any rate, there was a strange likeness between them, and an almost uncanny appropriateness in the appellation Esau.

Esau was not, it is true, tempted to barter his birthright for a mess of pottage, but I am sure he would any day have sold his good name, graven in so elaborate a fashion along the length of his body, for a mouthful of grass; for although he had eaten with enthusiasm at 7 A.M., and with rapture at 1 P.M., of all the delicacies included in a horse's bill of fare, by five o'clock he began to seek refreshments in every fence corner and along the grassy road, and stop and browse he would, though

Philistina coaxed and urged and finally applied her thread of a whip to his back. Not an inch would he stir, as indifferent to tears and prayers as a marble bust of Pallas.

Whenever these stoppages occurred, D. would call out in stentorian tones: "Why don't you come on, Philistina?" and wait for a reply, although the reason of her tarrying was as obvious to him as to her.

"What do you suppose men always ask you why for, when they know just as well as you do, Diana?" queried Philistina, when Esau and Sunday next rode abreast.

"Oh, it is simply the old tyrannical nature asserting itself," said Diana. "They require either a reason or an excuse, on the principal that some people consider a lie from an inferior an apology."

It was in front of a small white house with green blinds that Esau next paused for refreshments, the grass growing thick and green from the edge of the road to the little rail-fence. A lady was sitting on the porch making a worsted antimacassar by the light of the mackerel sky, and it would have seemed to a looker-on that her innocent and primitive employment would have put

her in sympathy with the simple bucolic pair. What, then, was Philistina's surprise when she heard, in a distinct though sweet and even tone, "I don't *suppose* father 'd object."

"I beg your pardon," said Philistina, bewildered.

"I don't *suppose*," a little doubtfully, "father 'd object. You see that is rightly *his* grass your horse is eating. I don't *really* suppose—I'm not a resident here myself. I'm married and live in Meriden. I've a carriage and horse of my own. I enjoy going out riding very much. I'm not a resident here. I'm just visiting, myself."

"I hope you'll have better luck than I've had if you should happen to let him browse on the highway in front of a house when you are, as you say, going out riding," said Philistina, suavely, pulling up Esau with a jerk that really set him going, though as a matter of history he went with his mouth full of the disputed grass. One would like to know more about this economical soul; it would not be uninteresting to trace her future career, which if thrift insures success will be high up in the millionaires.

The white and dusty road begins to be dotted at near intervals with little white houses, the yards grow smaller, and the number of children playing before the doors increase. The highway has become a street. These little houses are not pretty, but they are cheerful and neat, and the plot in front is generally crowded with flowers—grown together with no sort of eye to color or arrangement, but in hearty luxuriance. The similarity of the houses tells that New Hartford is a manufacturing village, and these are the homes of the hands, though now and then a more ambitious one, with towers and colored paint, points to what joys the ordinary workman may attain who becomes a manager or a foreman.

Philistina pretended to smile at the ambitious colored shingles and the mediæval towers of wood painted pink and yellow as unheard-of atrocities, but D. reproved her sharply with the reminder that not a dozen years ago she thought them the supreme architectural expression of beauty; for good taste is not as instinctive as we would like to think it, and, unlike the king-

dom of Heaven, comes by observation and not by spiritual gift.

Among our pale-faced country people they noted any number of curly-headed, dark-eyed children and blowsy, bonnetless women, whose strange tongues and costumes seemed oddly incongruous in the sweet, clean New England village.

"They have got here then, have they?" said Diana, regretfully. Diana's Christian charity does not include the Russian Jew.

The horseback riders had all the feeling of foreigners themselves, or rather of Americans in a foreign city, when they rode up to the low white house with the green shutters, the only house of entertainment they saw in the village, and the maids and the stable-boys ran out, and the proprietor in the doorway advanced and invited them to descend. There was something quite old world, too, in his attitude; a deprecating manner in speaking of his house.

"Just an old-fashioned place, you see," he said, rubbing his hands. "A country inn, but clean beds and a bit of hot supper."

Philistina in an instant was the repro-

duction of her English great-grandmother. "The rooms will suit us very well, no doubt, my good man," she said. "We will sup at eight; home-brewed ale, a gooseberry tart, and a couple of juicy cutlets."

"Didn't he say, 'My lady and 'ot supper,' Diana?" she whispered, as they went upstairs.

"Nonsense, Philistina; and why should you want to think it old England when New England is much nicer?" But we will not say that his engaging ways, so unlike the supercilious indifference of the hotel clerk to whom they were accustomed, did him any harm in the eyes of his guests.

That night they sat in the moonlight on the piazza and talked (with a certain condescension to be sure) to their host. He said there were several hundred Russian Jews in the town, working with an unexampled industry at the mills. These industries are the manufacture of rules and of sail-cloth. Perhaps New Hartford has the largest sail-cloth manufactory in the country. "Listen," he said, "to the talk of the people as they pass; you'd never guess you were in New England." They came

slouching by, not quite the independent slouch, either, of our American workmen, but with a sort of assuming indifference as to manners. The women were bareheaded, the men in coarse blouses and trousers. Diana, who is quick at languages, caught Canadian French, Roumanian, Swedish, low and high German, Polish, Viennese patois, Italian, Yorkshire dialect, the Irish brogue, and Russian.

"Do they spend their money here?" D. asked.

Mine host pointed to a large brick church with a cross on it that put the small white meeting-house to shame. "The Catholics built that," he said, "but I can't say the rest of them are members of the Village Improvement Society. I heard a Russian Jew cursing one of our people here the other day because she didn't give him what he called good measure for a cent's worth of milk. Industrious? they're infernally industrious; they live on nothing, and they can afford to work for nothing. They'll drive us out, you may depend!"

They had not succeeded in driving one Yankee out. This was a person who, the

horseback riders divined, with a supernatural intelligence, had something to sell; though anything further from trade than his manner would have been difficult indeed to conceive. He had built a sort of platform, raised and railed off, and placed in the middle of the square, and lighted it with torches soaked in oil. He was a family man, and exhibited with him his wife and boy, as testimonials of his respectable and domestic character, and, by inference, of the trustworthiness of his goods. They sat beside him very straight and dignified, taking his constant reference to them as just tributes to their importance. All the boys in the neighborhood gathered around the railing and looked at them with unflinching gaze, and a grave and still delight, not unmixed with hopeless envy. The fellow would have made his fortune in Congress talking against time. His voice was sonorous and far-reaching. Not a reference did he make to the business he was engaged in. He quoted poetry, he paid his tribute to religion, he declared himself on the temperance question, home, and "the sweet, sweet love of daughter, of sister, and of

wife," received his passing tribute. Only once did he descend to the realm of the commonplace, and that occurred when one of the impassive Yankee children who had guarded against the faintest expression of interest on his upturned, freckled face unwarily trod on a dog. The dog not being bred in the same school of manners where emotion betrays ill-breeding, yelped, and the orator, with cruel injustice, attacked the boy. "Where were you raised?" he demanded in a fine frenzy. "Interrupting a public speaker in his oration. Have you no home, no mother to teach you better? No mother, boy? Then God help you!"

They did not stay the oration out, because the landlord confided to them that Demosthenes had been in New Hartford before, and was selling electric oil, not that he loved the seller less, who he assured them was a family man, and well worth patronizing, but what did they want with patent medicines?

"The horses are all right, of course," said Philistina, taking her candle. The very act increased the illusion of foreign parts, and she made it as a statement, not an interrogation.

"Oh, right enough," said D., jauntily.

XII

"DIANA, the innkeeper has just come into the dining-room, and given me such a turn I really don't know how I shall ever bear it."

"When you are excited like that, Philistina," said Diana, coldly, "you are incapable of conveying information. How many times has Miss Anthony urged us, when we are agitated, to count twenty, and then say exactly what we mean!"

"Oh, very well," said Philistina, "if you don't care to know—"

"Good gracious! tell me this instant. Was it anything about my trunk not meeting me here as we had arranged? Why, I had my best hat in it to wear in Lenox, Sunday; the one with the feathers, you know—that nice English shape that comes down a little over the forehead, but turns up in the back. Did he say it was lost, or hadn't come, or what? For Heaven's sake, Philistina, tell

me what he said ; if there is anything women ought to cultivate, it's clearness and definiteness and despatch. Why on earth don't you tell whether it's my trunk, and what did he think I'd better do? Oh, dear, that particular hat! What did he say—now? his exact words? You know I can't go down now with my front hair all in a state like this, and the iron hot."

"He said," said Philistina, slowly and deliberately, "Please, my lady—"

"Nonsense," said Diana; "tell me at once. Philistina, I do hope you're not going to try to be humorous. You know Lady Henry Somerset considers humor the very next thing to coarseness. What did he say about my trunk, and don't keep anything from me in a false notion of pity."

"He said Esau's back had two little lumps on it just at the end of the backbone," said Philistina, "and he thinks it's going to rise and have to be lanced, and we'd better sell him at once on the road."

"Sell him, indeed!" cried Diana; "that's exactly like all the rest of them, trying to impose on us because we are two lone women. But really, Philistina, you ought

not to be so sensational; why, you made me think something dreadful had happened. I'll be down there the minute I get this curl turned."

"But, you know, we aren't exactly two lone women," persisted Philistina; "there's D."

"A stable-man can make any other man think anything he wants to have him think," said Diana, "but don't be argumentative, Philistina; you know that's the way with women who do the most harm to the Cause. I'll be there the very minute I get this front hair"—but D.'s voice calling sent Philistina away, so that she divined rather than heard the completion of the sentence.

She found Esau munching a wisp of hay. There were a great many people about him, and all were giving advice. He alone, the victim and the hero, like the Duke of Argyle on the scaffold, was indifferent, and even careless of the end, looking around with an untroubled gaze into eyes that were full of grief. The hostler, a lively Irishman, was, I fear, of a double nature. He wanted to please everybody, and when the livery-stable-keeper—a tall, gray New-Englander,

with a soothing voice—made hopeless prognostications as to the condition of the back, he agreed in voluminous speech, but by a large, taciturn wink, communicated the information that the boss was coming it over them, and the horse would be fit enough with careful riding and a proper rubbing down at night.

"There is very little the matter," announced Diana, when she appeared, "but it is just as well to give him six of No. 7. Three for a man—and I suppose we might double the dose without danger to a horse."

I take pleasure in recording that six of No. 7 did not prove too large a dose. Esau ate them cheerfully out of Philistina's hand, and was none the worse.

"I hope you'll make New Boston by night," said the livery-stable-man. "But, in my opinion, the little 'un's done for."

The ladies mounted the horses with scant leave-taking, but D. dropped behind.

"You've been paying that hostler, haven't you, D.?" asked Philistina. "He's such a nice, sensible fellow. Did you see him wink so as to tell us not to believe that disagreeable livery-man?"

"Yes—ah—I saw him, and I handed him, well—a half-dollar; poor fellow, that—ah—gesture might have cost him his place. And, as you say, he struck me as a nice, sensible man, though he didn't *say* anything to compromise himself—indeed, I believe he rather agreed with his master, but he did—ah—communicate his distrust in the way you mention."

Ah, well-a-day, only last Sunday D. was laughing at the man who found all his fellow-beings intelligent and trustworthy, who divining his opinions agreed with them.

It was a lovely morning, cool and crisp—at least, yet a while, and they followed the Farmington River up hill and down till they again entered a deep wood which was so high above the stream that one looked down upon it from a precipice, but a precipice whose steep sides were hidden with golden-rod and purple-topped iron-weed, and lady's-slipper springing up in the hollows. Close to the road velvety willows waved, and below their airy tops was a vista of trees, arching above the river-bank; the glimpses of sky they caught through the overlapping tree-tops showed it an un-

clouded blue, and Philistina bethought her that it looked like a Thursday sky, as it was—a mid-week, washed and ironed sky, on which the most conscientious of New-Englanders might take a well-earned repose.

Pleasant Valley lies between New Hartford and Riverton; it is a charming country, more like one long street than a succession of farms. The houses are built close to the road, with dooryard evergreens that hold them in close shade all the year, and great barns that also show their broad, low gables to the road, and make the houses look small and insignificant. It was at Riverton they decided to stop till the heat of the day was over; I do not know how far this little town is from the railroad, but it looks remote from stores and traffic. A handsome iron bridge spans the Farmington, and then there is a long, wide street, intersected by another street bordered by elms, and another pretty bridge to cross ere you come to the Riverton House, where man and beast are accommodated.

Philistina could scarcely wait for Esau's saddle to be removed, so eager was she to

discover whether the double dose of No. 7 had been injurious, and even Diana looked a trifle nervous; but there was no acceleration of the size of the lumps, and he was soon eating his four quarts of oats like a first-born who had never been physicked nor lost his birthright.

The day at Riverton was full of a sunny tranquillity, which, somehow or other, gave Philistina a heartache, and yet it was not a heartache she wished away. They sat for a while in the parlor of the inn, a low-ceiled room with stiff furniture, which, while it was not old enough to make them covetous, had a quaint character of its own, and watched the people pass on infrequent journeys up the street to the drug-store and the General Commission. Opening on the parlor is a large and cheerful room, where presently they were sumptuously to dine; somehow, it had the look of a ball-room, and there were other hospitable apartments built in a rambling way all about the corner lot the inn occupies, that suggest by-gone gayety when my lady passed through with her coach and four, and the lawyers stopped for the night on their way

to Hartford, and the great stages with their load of merchants tarried with the goods and the news, bringing the latest word from Boston.

Their hostess, however, could weave them no romances of the past. She was a newcomer from quite a different neighborhood, which the riders were surprised to find was, after all, only three miles off, but she counted herself, and was quite submissive to be counted, a stranger. One must live in a New England village at least a century to arrogate to one's self any familiar airs.

She told them there were two versions of the legend of the Barkhamsted Lighthouse, an inland warning to seafarers, that often puzzled the travellers. One was that the Indians always kept a light burning there of a dark night to induce travellers to alight, that they might fall upon them and rob them. Another was of a softer nature. A certain old woman, with an uncanny reputation and three pretty daughters, nightly lit the far-reaching torch which guided the maiden's lovers through circuitous ways from the valley below to the hut on the hill.

When they were cooled and rested they went down into the village, stopping to lean over the pretty bridge and look at the gold-colored water running in a rapid stream beneath. There is a factory on the other side, and a Canadian Frenchman with oblique eyes and swarthy complexion told them with bitterness, as if his fair province had been usurped, that the Russian Jew was ousting all the respectable working people out of Riverton. "*Ces scélérats!*" he said, with his Gallic shrug, and Philistina privately thought the shrug and the French were just as incongruous in the dear Puritan town as the jargon (we instinctively call all the languages we don't understand jargon) of the Russian Hebrew.

D. does not like graveyards, nor funerals, except the gay Irish funerals which somehow reconcile one to the inevitable by their common-sense cheerfulness in view of so commonplace a thing as death; but the Riverton graveyard, at least, that in which the pretty stone church is set, is really quite a cheery little spot, and Diana and Philistina had little trouble in coaxing him over to sit on the fallen slabs and smell the sweet gar-

den flowers that were blooming all about. The church is disfigured by a Grecian temple that surmounts its solid stone architecture; but for this decoration it would be an æsthetic object to the most heterodox of observers; but D. said that temple was as much a sign of orthodoxy on a New England Congregational meeting-house, of a certain period, as a cross of the Catholic belief. There are inanimate things, you know, that are not of themselves inherently good or bad, or religious or heretical, but association has made them so. The Greek temple on top of the meeting-house meant sound doctrine.

"But where are all the people?" queried Philistina.

"The women in Riverton," said D., "are doubtless at their legitimate tasks: keeping their houses."

"And the men," said Diana, scornfully, "are at theirs: at the tavern or the store drinking beer and talking politics."

Philistina, who by this time had learned both to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, contented herself with saying there was something indecorous almost in

the people across the way playing tennis in an old garden. Tennis in Riverton looked somehow as if an old woman had arrayed herself in a too-too youthful gown.

There were several tombs whose inscriptions they deciphered, but one they united in finding unique. A wife of many years' discipline is commemorated by her husband in these words, after birth and marriage are mentioned:

> "And on the —— of ——, 1801,
> Her spirit, *it is charitably hoped*,
> Took its flight
> To fairer realms above."

"This is the only candid inscription on a tomb I have ever read," said D. "The woman was a virago or a blue-stocking, or a poor cook, and all the husband could say for her was he hoped she had gone to a better place. I'm glad he lived thirty years after her. And the evidence is strong that he was satisfied with his attempt at matrimony and in no temper to risk it again, for you see there was no tomb to a second wife. There is no such proof of a man's happiness with his first wife as his willingness to undertake another."

"There is something more pitiful even than the lack of appreciation of this husband," said Diana, with flashing eye. "All these inscriptions under which women lie refer to their relation with the other sex: 'A dutiful spouse,' 'An affectionate mother to loving sons,' 'Her brother's joy,' 'She shall do him good and not evil all the days of her life,' 'Her husband also, and he praiseth her.' Now don't you suppose these women had any personality outside their care for the men of their households, and would like to be remembered because they were wise, or prudent, or sensible as men are remembered?"

"My dear Diana," said D., "when these people lived and died they were under the Jewish dispensation. The Puritan woman was an Oriental in her attitude towards men. We have done away with the Jewish Sabbath, and we shall do away — I think, indeed, we have already done away — with the Jewish view of woman; let us hope we have come into the Christian era at last."

His sweet reasonableness had its effect, and all three strolled about the sunny graves

with a feeling of good-fellowship as if they had at last got on common ground.

"I wonder why it does not frighten one," said Philistina, at last: "the inevitableness of their fate being one's own, and that some day this awful thing must happen to you and to me."

"It does not frighten you," said D., "because it is going to happen to me and to Diana and to every other living creature, but not to you. Everybody makes himself the exception, and this, and this alone, is why you are not afraid. But come, we must away."

At 4 P.M. they cantered out of Riverton.

XIII

THE Farmington River rippled and burned and gleamed in the sun — burned a trifle too fiercely to suit the horseback riders as they rode along its banks to New Boston. And presently the sun set, and all the nearer sky looked like a sort of blushing foam that extended into waves of light and shade. Near the edges of the farther clouds were monoliths and columns of coral that stood out straight and fine, and back of all was a far-reaching mystery of blue.

But it was a far cry to their destination, and it seemed, at least to Philistina and Diana, as if New Boston was as distant as the New Jerusalem. By seven o'clock—this was August 5th—they began to ask people how far it was, and to have positive likes and dislikes for them as their replies went. If a person said New Boston was still far off, he was at once set down as an objec-

tionable individual. If the distance was shortened, the reply gave the answerer a good place in the riders' affections. The first woman, a kindly soul, heard them, when they got to Coldbrook and stopped in front of her house, trying to get some information out of her son, whose intelligence spoke badly for heredity somewhere. But the riders soon discovered that the fault did not come from the maternal side, for the mother came bustling down full of interest and information. She was dressing for a church sociable, which term, to ears accustomed to "meetings of the Young People's Christian Endeavor Society," seemed oddly homely, but she didn't mind a mite coming down just this way—if they didn't. As to telling them the way, she guessed she'd do it better'n Jim. Jim was the most dependable body to get to a place that ever was, but he couldn't tell how he got there. He went to New Boston every week, but as to showing you, 'less he went along, he couldn't do it. 'Twas the way with a lot of good people, good they were, and everybody knew it, but they couldn't give any sort of experience if 'twas in heaven itself,

and they'd be asked. All they could say'd be, there they was.

"And that would be all they'd need say, I am sure," said Philistina, sympathetically. The boy didn't look so stupid after that, for there is innocence and there is dulness, and they are two different things.

"How far is it?" questioned D., when she had given her clear testimony for the river instead of the hill road.

"Well, two miles and a half," she replied, with an attitude of sorrow that she could not conscientiously make it less.

"Only two miles and a half?" exclaimed Philistina; "what a nice, sensible soul! I almost love her."

But when they had ridden a half-hour longer, and the next person called out "two miles and a half—a good half, too," both of the ladies broke out in vindictive language. "I never saw a ruder, more disagreeable man." And so on till they reached New Boston in the dim twilight. They hated the people who said it was far, and loved those who decreased the distance, not in the least regarding whether they spoke the truth or not.

The inn at New Boston resolved itself that night in a dim memory of a dark stable, where each man unsaddled his own beast, and a long, low dining-room, where they ate hot steak and fried potatoes, and were thankful. It was exactly the dish they would have ordered had they been at Delmonico's, because when there are three Americans, beefsteak and potatoes are what is always agreed upon. And yet they did not feel like diners at Delmonico's when they went to their well-served meal, presided over by a lady with kind eyes and gray hair who rejoiced hospitably in their being hearty. There are places I recall in Paris and Vienna where the shabby waiter in the worn dress-suit wishes one "*bon appetit*" with a show of effusion, but we are conscious that one must pay in sous or even francs for that shallow compliment, and the "*bon appetit*" is not so genial before a *table d'hôte* dinner as one served *à la carte*.

They found next morning that the reason New Boston was so near and yet so far the night before was because it is irregularly built, and the red lights of its houses dodge in and out of view while it is miles away.

The best house and the church are well set up here, but the shops, or rather stores, are in the valley, and New Boston is so country-like and so childless that all the way down from the hill to the town were blackberry-vines covered with untouched fruit. I said childless with a sort of sigh, for the two pretty little girls who ran about the inn proclaimed themselves proudly from Meriden, and their companion, a boy in his afternoon clean shirt and face, was from Suffield.

"There's only four other children we know who live here," said the eldest little girl, "and that's one of them;" and she pointed to a little girl who was going by. She looked indeed a country girl in her blue stuff gown made long, and sewed stoutly onto the waist. A real sun-bonnet covered her head. "She's taking blackberries to some old people who live in that big house. She has to work, but, oh! she's a splendid player when she does play."

"Yes, she's a splendid player," the children echoed.

"Henny, Henny, come play!"

But Henny turned her sturdy little legs neither to the right nor the left. "Soon es

I do my chores," she answered back, and plodded on her busy way. The children hung around and waited aimlessly. The grown people concluded Henny hadn't a bad sort of time, after all.

Diana and Philistina thought they had never seen such a stylish young man as the one who overlooked them—he called himself a clerk—at one of the stores. He might as well as not have come out of a Hebrew clothing-store in the Bowery. He wore a thick bang and an air of insolent ease that ought to have put him in the first four of the Four Hundred. Having nothing which they asked for in stock, they advised with him as to the possibilities of the other stores, and then he added to his slender vocabulary: "He knew nothing about New Boston nor the people—'twa'n't in his line."

Dear, dear, what was his line? The part of Hamlet, with all stars in the company, or that greater social height, the head-waiter at Delmonico's?

Down in the village they saw nothing so interesting as this enchanted prince, except a girl with a pretty straw-hat on carrying a glass of jelly across the street; the waiter

was covered with a napkin, and a sprig of sweet verbena lay on one side. The glass was long and narrow, and of that delicious shape they thought were all smashed the day their grandmothers were buried.

"Diana," said Philistina, "did you know anybody ever sent jelly to sick people nowadays?"

"Say ill, Philistina," said Diana; "we are not at sea." And then she burst out with: "The dear old thing! I'd almost be willing to be sick to have it brought me, neighbor-like, as that is, only it is wicked, you know, to be ill."

The drive they presently took, by the courtesy of a Hartford friend, was along the river-bank; but the river's course was broken by huge rocks and fallen logs, so that it poured in white cascades into gold-colored pools. On the opposite side was a deep wood of varied greens. The near road-side was also thick-set with green growths: thickets of blackberry bushes, with pennon-like tops, purple thistle, woodbine, flinging itself over rocks and bushes with an *abandon* that bespoke a more torrid home than its present temperate one; thoroughwort, at

which D. trembled. "They used to give it to me in the spring," he said, "brewed in a strong tea, against sickness. The better I was, more surely had I to take it to keep well." I only tell the common names of the plants, and that in some confusion—there were knitted banks of golden-rod and sumach, and the "false" buckwheat scrambling on top. D. looked vainly for blue gentians, finding only one, but saw rabbit's-foot, and May-weed, shepherd's-purse, and white clover, and civis, and greenbrier filling in the chinks, and wild-grape vines so cunningly intertwined in the thicket that they were constantly calling out at the monstrosity of its bearing mulberries and kindred fruits.

It gave them a pang to see four comfortable houses in succession, two with good gardens, where vegetables and grain were growing, and fruit-yards with apple-trees groaning under their load of fruit, the doors and windows nailed up, the place deserted.

"Folks gone West," said the driver, laconically.

"But it's a terrible life out West," said D.; "those great distances between the farms,

the cruel winters, the hot summers. Here they have excellent schools, church privileges, a free library, really cultivated society in its best sense, and these pleasant places where comparatively they have none of the discomforts of the West."

"What does your worship know of farming anywhere?" ventured Philistina.

"Know!" said D. "Why, I knew about farming from my birth till my tenth year. Do you suppose a man ever forgets anything he learned then?"

"Some places seem to have done their work," said the driver, in defence of the emigrants; "a new house would look smart and perky in this old village, and you see the young people's passin' off. There's very few children in New Boston. And when you've worked a horse all its measure of days it ought to rest. Our grandsires worked this land, and our fathers worked it, and we worked it. It seems to me it's earned a spell from our children."

"It *is* melancholy, D.," said Philistina, as they went in the stable to saddle their horses; they never met a liveryman who could do it, which shows they are not used

to women's riding horseback in New England.

"Yes; but I envy their gift of quiet," said D., looking at the long silent stretch of granite walls, the flower-crowned meadows, the still white houses, every blind shut, the little silent dogs that pass through the lanes. The old men were sitting in their shirt-sleeves before the kitchen doors reading the last month's *Agriculturist*, or making a feint of reading, for they were fast asleep.

"But not enough to want to go back to it, I hope," said Philistina.

"No, no," said D., hastily; "we can't go back. Even were one well-beloved risen from the grave, he might well hover outside his own threshold, doubting his welcome."

The road to New Marlborough leads over high hill crests, from which there are ever-changing views, wide sweeps to the south horizon, outcropping granite ridges and bowlders, then a dip into deep woods, and a farewell to a pretty little stream by which they rode two or three miles, silver rushes of water over moss-covered logs, deep silent

pools, bounded on either side with thick undergrowths of flowers and ferns, and straggling vines that put out long arms to ensnare the travellers and hold them prisoners in the magic wood. And there was a bridge under which the water shone like a burnished shield, and a long narrow lane, where there were creamy elder bushes, and amber woodbine turned into rubies, and thorn-trees, heavy with coral beads—they might have been jewels, had the riders only stopped to look. And, as they mounted the hill, tall scarlet cardinal-flowers nodded a welcome, and the fences were covered with wild grape, that gave out a sweet, sensuous odor. In the warm, enervating air it was hard to believe this was New England, home of sturdy faiths and grim convictions. "If it lasted much longer," said D., musingly, "this riotous summer, one can fancy our sons and daughters very like the sons and daughters Horace dwelt among, though for that matter the climate of Italy has changed since his day if there is any truth in his description. Instead of vexing ourselves with dogmas and creeds, we would be listeners, pillowed on the green

turf, to orchard choruses, and as the poet has it:

> "'Ludit herboso pecus omne campo,
> Festus in pratus vacat otioso,
> Cum bove pagus.'

"Does my lady perfect herself in the modern rather than the ancient tongues?

> "'In the long grass the herds and flocks shall sport upon the lea,
> And man and beast in idleness the livelong day shall be.'"

"But that's about December, D.," cried Diana, "and you've left out a line."

"His December corresponded with our August," said D., curtly, and falling back to ride with Philistina, who had accustomed herself to ride with Esau for company.

Sandersfield is a melancholy township, though it is pleasantly placed. Only two families spent last winter in the centre. Somebody told them that in '70 it contained 700 souls. But I do not know a more lovely view than that from the height of the plateau. A wide, treeless plain, with patches of fire-weed glowing in the midst of the green, clumps of scant "painter's brush"

gleaming like red torches in the grass; the natural slope in the valley, with belts and bars and flickering spaces of dark shadows playing over it. Then a stretch of forest, and then the Berkshire Hills resting low in the distance and not defining the horizon, so that one has a sense of space and a sense of solitude.

As they rode along the desolate, deserted country, a voice startled them.

It was a man in a cabbage-patch, digging diligently; but he got up and ran into the road.

"Having a good time?" he called out, cheerily. Bless the fellow for his divine gift of sympathy; he didn't seem to be having a good time, working in that lonesome field; but he wanted us to be having it.

The sight of his forlorn figure and kind smile made them as melancholy as that of the fine old deserted house they reached within a mile or two of New Marlborough. It was a true colonial mansion: wide hall through the centre, a lovely porch with a pointed arch and little fluted columns, which were as dainty and as graceful as

the church-spire in Farmington, and, if there is any justice in this world, ought to bring tears to the eyes of the author of *Daisy Miller*, since those eyes were unable to look at a jug of beer and a loaf of bread painted by the younger Teniers without a burst of unmanly emotion.

"There is nothing," said D., "so helpless looking as a deserted house."

"Except," said Diana, sagely, "an empty mind."

That quotation from Horace had put Diana in a good-humor with herself.

"But a mind may well be empty of selfishness and egotism, and many another evil," said D. "There are very few whole truths; most of them have to be modified."

"Oh," said Philistina, "if you're going to quote old truisms and try to pass them off as original conclusions, I shall ride ahead."

Ahead meant New Marlborough. Why new? It is a very, very old town, and not the most literal of Anglo-Saxon tourists could take it as a plagiarism of the Marlborough across the water; not that it is not the prettiest of villages, with its green, its church-spire, and its colonial houses.

The horseback people slept well. The next morning, booted and spurred, they sought the stables.

Esau's back had two humps on it as large as hens' eggs.

Diana and D. were for the first time united since their literary spat, and they travestied the immortal saying of the two great English leaders during the Franco-Prussian war. "Warm as are our sympathies with Germany," said Disraeli and the Grand Old Man, "let us weep together over poor France."

"Let us weep together," said these two, sorrowfully, "over poor Esau."

XIV

THE fate of Esau hung in the balance two days. By night it was reported in the stables that he was a very sick horse. The next day that he had fallen lame; that afternoon he had turned his face to the wall like Elizabeth in the play. D. went out with the stable-man who was attending him, and when he came back his countenance was lightened.

"I've sold him," he said, with an air of having accomplished a great feat.

"Who to, D.?" queried Philistina, who didn't mind grammar when she wanted information.

"Oh, to the stable-man," said D., in an indifferent manner. "He says he's taking a risk, but he's willing to."

Diana and Philistina exchanged glances. "How much did you get?" said the latter.

"You don't expect a man to sell a dying horse for a mine of money, do you?" replied

D., impatiently. "Come, Philistina, get into the carriage, and let the hotel proprietor drive you over to Stockbridge; we'll ride."

"Oh, D.," cried Philistina, "he's cheated you; I know he has, and it's too bad! If you only were clever about things like some people—"

"Philistina," said D., "I have long based my opposition to equal rights on the fact that women are not essentially honest. You know perfectly well in a horse trade one party has got to do the other party, and you are regretting in the liveliest of terms that I didn't do that hostler instead of his doing me. You'd be just the same in any political matter or any legal matter. You'd be like Sir Arthur Helps's old woman, who expected her shilling to buy twice as much as other people's shillings because it was hers. What you wanted would in your eyes be right, and you'd wink at the immorality if you discovered any, because you couldn't believe anything that could benefit the side you had taken could be very bad."

"Nonsense," said Philistina, "pecuniary honesty is peculiar to women, though I agree with M. Renan: it is the most *bour-*

geois of all the virtues, and one supposed to require the least self-repression. Besides, if somebody has to be done in a horse trade, why let that stable-man take the sin on his conscience? You look much more able to bear it."

"It is queer," said D., taking no notice, "that association with so noble an animal as the horse seems to affect the character of men to their detriment. You would think that such an animal would be excellent company; but it is not true. Liverymen, stablemen, jockeys—they are all of a sort. They look you in the face and sweetly lie you out of your choicest steed. After this journey I have done with horses. I have found my temptation, thank Heaven, in time!"

In almost any other period of American history it would seem a pity to end this record of a journey in humiliation instead of triumph. Twenty years ago, perhaps, the most conscientious of Philistinas would have been pardoned if she had, like the sun, gone down in the golden glow of a recovered Esau, herself a sort of a lady centaur on his back, loping in perfect harmony together over the Berkshire hills. But

the spirit of the age demands not only that this record be faithful to the eternal verities, but that it be as pessimistic a piece of literature as the sad, sad public loves. Philistina was too conscious of that exacting audience to let her saddle experiences terminate in commonplace success and good-cheer. She did not, it is true, carry the doctrine of destructiveness so far as to subject herself to a last interview with Esau; but the calm stoicism with which she changed her riding-habit for a blue flannel skirt and blouse waist, a costume which was repeated with some uniformity by other travellers last summer, and turned her face in another manner of journeying towards Stockbridge, was not without its pathetic aspect. This simple submission to the whirlwind of fate, and acquiescence in the settled belief that men are merely atoms blown in its path, evinced an acquaintance with modern fiction that spoke well for her stern determination to read novels, not for their plot, but their moral lesson.

Diana and D., for a time at least, went on without her; and if she was haunted with a vision of Esau prancing out of the stable

with his altruistic purchaser on his back as soon as she had got well out of New Marlborough, let us hope she was willing to let her experience prove that life is very sad and very disappointing, and it becomes us to verify the assertions of the greatest living authors—that nothing is really worth while.

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