

AN INTERCEPTED LETTER.

We've been here at Narragansett just two weeks, dear,
and the reason
I've not written is because I have not had an hour
to spare;
What with romance, rocks, and bathing, and the very
crowded season,
All my leisure is exhausted keeping crimpings in
my hair.

First, the bathing? I have never bathed, you know,
because Aunt Maggie
Liked the mountains; but this year the Flodden-
Tompkins took my part.

Here I am, and lost in wonder at the costumes scant
and taggy,
And the stockings—highest, surely, style of Decora-
tive Art.

Yes, red stockings seem the custom; dress cut short,
and really gaudy,
In wa go, and never mind the lack of what's called
"emphasis;"
And for all the world we look like ancient splinters
bullet-dancing,
Or a lot of withered metemorphosed much collapsed and
cut of joint.

Oh, such shapes! such ribs! such elbows! If the
poet had but seen us
Who got up the antique myth (don't ask me who),
it could not be
Even in his wildest dreams he ever would have thought
of Venus
Rising (in red stockings?), rising slowly from the
foam-clad sea.

If we're horrid, though, the men are something worse.
I fairly tremble
When I see a dripping swimmer coming whom I've
known on shore,
Hair all lank, unctuous all stringy—e'en the hand-
somest resemble
Swimming dogs, their hides all clammy; "only this,
and nothing more."

As to modesty—don't name it. The Apollo Belvedere
Wouldn't make me change opinion, Art or no Art.
Yet I beg
That you will not mention what I tell you; but the
truth is, Mary,
There's no beauty in a wet uncovered human foot
and leg.

Yet these men think naught of coming, bare below
the knee, and walking
On the sands, where all the tide of fashion daily
ebbs and flows,
Bowling, smiling, quite unconscious of their legs, and
even talking
To the girls, gesticulating meanwhile with their
wet bare toes!

It is awful! For I'm sure, at least among the upper
classes,
Toes were always, like some verbs, things under-
stood but not expressed.
'Twould be well to post up where this bare-legged
crowd of bathers passes,
"Man never is" (you know the line?), "but always"
(I think) "to be dressed."

Yes, it's awful, Art or no Art! And but one man I've
discovered
In whose garb there's nothing that our sense of
delicacy shocks;
He's a clergyman, who, all in flannel (dark blue), nice-
ly covered,
Head to foot, wears studs and collar, neck-tie, hat,
and dark blue socks.

Just too lovely! That's the style of bathing that I call
artistic;
Quiet, comfortable—looking as you do on shore,
you know;
All the rest are, I confess, dear, much too wet and
realistic—
Endless groups of legs and arms, with flesh-tints
after Buguereau.

Now I've told you all there is to tell about the place,
excepting
Sunsets, ocean, rocks, and clams, Point Judith, and
that sort of thing;
That's of course; I'll let them pass, and help you, May,
in your selecting,
In case you come here; it is so hard to know exactly
what to bring.

If you come, May, bring a hat, dear, broad of brim,
and accidental
As your hands can't make it look; then feathers, in
successive shocks.

Do not fail to find a wrap that looks bizarre and Ori-
ental;
The effect is captivating when you're sitting on the
rocks.

Never mind the dresses, only that they're black in
line, or creamy;
But French slippers and silk stockings—Mary, bring
your very best;
Parasols to match the stockings; faintest mauve is
sweetly dreamy,
As you stand against the sunset, outlined in the
glowing west.

Bring some books in brilliant bindings—for one of
our little ways is
Now and then to read apart, the book contrasting
with the dress.

Bring no jewels; all we wear are little simple knots
of daisies;
"Close to nature"—that's the word, though what it
means I must confess

I've no notion. Study up some verses till you say
them sweetly,
Two or three, no more; the best are those that no
one understands—
Weird and mystic; or, if you are sure that you can do
it neatly,
There's the rôle, "femme incomprise," that has done
women in good hands.

Bring a book—say Adelaide Procter—interlined and
marked, remember;
If you haven't it, then buy one; mark it, bend it,
give it knocks
With the poker; curl the edges, add a tear-drop, scent
with amber;
That's the book you leave behind you and forget
upon the rocks.

And "lawn tennis," you must know it; that is quite
the thing to do here:
How the name brings Montague and Wallack's from
the shadowy past!
"Shall we join them at lawn tennis?" Ah, alas! it is
too true, dear,
No one here begins to look as "H. J." did in *Won-
at Last*.

But "H. J." belongs to winter, and we must not mix
sensations;
As Mrs. Flodden-Tompkins says (her stockings have
the Tompkins crest!),
"When sparrows build and leaves break forth, 'tis
time for us to make migrations,
We human birds, and throw ourselves on Mother
Nature's tawny breast."

Isn't that too sweet? And, Mary, will you help me?
I've been hunting
For a word Fitzsaddle used the other day as I came
in:
"Clothed in white samite." What is samite? do you
know? The dress was bunting,
"Blanchisseuse," with floss of corn for trimming
where the folds begin.

Now, dear Mary, I have written sheets, when clearly
'twas my duty
To have crimped my hair anew; and, as it is, I shall
be late;
A crimpless woman, though a Venus, is not here "a
thing of beauty—"
There comes Fitzsaddle—I must hurry; good-by,
dear. Your loving KATE.

P.S.—If by chance you see Tom Granger—he says he
can not get away—
Just say I asked about him. Will you? Now don't
forget. Your loving K.