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BALLAST ISLAND.

A STORY OF LAKE ERIE.

THE lake was blue, deep blue, and fairy wavelets broke on the island-beaches, each with its miniature foam-crest and gentle wash. The sun had vanished, but all the banners of his royal army flamed in the sky,

rock-deities had come to the surface to gaze over the water for a while; an unseen, whispering presence lurked in the groves; the caverns into which the wavelets ran put on an air of mystery, as if they might be fathom-

miles away, so vague and purple were their outlines in the golden haze. Only Lake Erie and its group of wine-islands—a Western archipelago, without poetry or fame, but beautiful as the charmed waters of the Old



"Come along, girl!"—Page 836.

a mighty host of colors marching down to the west, rank by rank, leaving vacant behind them the pale-golden field of the evening, where already an advance-guard of the night had appeared—the star Hesperus in his silver armor. The islands near and far were veiled in the shadows of twilight; familiar cliffs showed strange profiles, as if

less; and Elizabeth forgot that only that very morning she had pushed her skiff within, and gathered the little shells from their utmost beach. Dusky vineyards, stretching from shore to shore, looked like enchanted labyrinths, in which a man might wander forever in a twilight that never changed; and the outlying islands seemed hundreds of

World! Fame, after all, is often but a question of time. If the Pacific held in store another undiscovered continent, we in our turn might hope to become classical: Grant might live again as a species of Hercules, Emerson as a Socrates, Theodore Thomas as an Orpheus, Bret Harte as a Horace, and dear, delightful Sothorn as a Thespis; school-

boys, several thousand years hence, might be translating "Dundreary," and pedants might be writing learned notes upon the Geological Society of the Stanislaw. The wine-islands of Lake Erie, also, might then have their Sappho.

But the Pacific holds no continent, and future generations will tread the same ground we are treading. No romantic pilgrims will sigh among the ruins of New York. We cannot hope to become classic. It takes a continent to discover a continent, and an age to discover an age, which, being interpreted, signifies that a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.

Elizabeth Pyne was floating in a skiff alone on the blue water. Behind, on the island, stood the long, white hotel, with its rows of green blinds and piazzas, its oak-grove, and its little dock. Here, during the summer months, came languid people from the South-western rivers—the Mississippi, the Tennessee, the Ohio—and from the Blue-Grass region; and here, in the early autumn, when the vineyards were purple, came the wiser people of the lake-cities, culling the best of the grapes and the weather, and bringing back full game-bags from their shooting-expeditions into the marshy wilderness of Sandusky Bay. The Southerners had gone back to their rivers, and the lake-city people were in possession. Already September had passed its meridian, but the golden weather held them in its spell. "Only one day more," they said to each other every evening; but still they remained, like the singers whose last appearances are long drawn out, dependent upon the lingering golden sunshine of popular favor.

But all the loveliness of air, earth, sky, and water, could not charm away from Elizabeth's mind the certainty that she was angry; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone, and by fits and starts she rowed with quick dashes, very different from the long, sweeping strokes natural to her skilled wrists and the peaceful evening. Needless to hesitate over the cause of this mood! Given a girl of beauty, a fair Juliet in anger, and instantly there arises, on the opposite side of the picture, a dark Romeo, who is the cause of all. In this case Romeo was Frederick Harper, and a clergyman, but a Romeo still, for he loved. He was a clergyman, but vigorous, energetic, and up even with the march of knowledge scientific, philosophic, and political; a man whom it did your heart good to see in the ranks; a man with brain, heart, and muscle enough for success in any of the worldly occupations, where fortunes are offered as prizes; a man who, capable of any thing, had chosen this. The thoughtless said: "What a pity!" But the earnest answered: "This is as it should be. Would that the greatest profession could always have the greatest! Whereas we all know how—" and a sigh closed the sentence.

Miss Pyne and Mr. Harper were in that lovely shadow-land of expectation through the vista of which there shines from beyond a golden light; the path leads toward it, but the vague aisles are full of enchantment, and the travellers linger to gather flowers, or step aside to follow the course of a brook, sure,

however, to come back again to the beaten path, each time nearer and still nearer to the open sunshine beyond. In this case the plain words "Wilt thou?" had not been spoken; but, as the church-gossips said, "they understood each other." O busy tongues, ye spoke better than ye knew! To understand each other—what can express more? We all long to be understood; but only a rare, true love can penetrate to the sanctuary where each soul waits for its interpreter, as the beautiful sleeper in the wood waited for the prince. The mother thinks that she understands her child, but there are chambers in that daughter's heart which she can never enter. Sisters, brothers, friends, and, alas! even husbands and wives, live through life waiting, waiting, but the prince comes not. When we meet him, at last, face to face, that will be heaven enough for some of us.

Yes; Frederick and Elizabeth understood each other. They read the same books, and compared their opinions; they kept for each other treasure-troves of fugitive verses; they loved the same music—Mendelssohn, Wagner, and German folk-songs, with some of the plaintive negro melodies of the Southern rivers, for they did not belong to the musicians of one idea; the one-idea people become wearisome after a time. (Mont Blanc is grand, and we like to ascend to its summit; but must we therefore choose it as a residence? Great is classical music! And, having thus saluted it, we are quietly thankful that there are still cakes and ale.) They enjoyed the long personal conversations possible only to lovers, in which the hidden feelings come to the surface, and take delight in communion face to face. To each the other's mere presence made every-day life glorious. With Elizabeth, the whether or not to go always resolved itself into the question, "Shall I see him?" To Frederick, with whom the going was seldom a matter of choice, the possibility of enjoyment meant, "Will she be there?" Generally she was. Clergymen are fortunate. Or is it unfortunate? They have a weekly round which they must tread; nor can they flit to the right or the left, as fancy might suggest. But Mohammed comes to the mountain. It is remarkable how that weekly round is brightened by the fair faces that smile upon its borders.

Elizabeth and Frederick understood each other—to a certain extent; but the woman was nervous from inaction, the man lethargic from fatigue. Elizabeth did so little that she was constantly longing for excitement; Frederick so much that he was constantly longing for rest. Spending an autumn vacation among the vineyards of the vine-islands, the young man gave way to a full enjoyment of that delicious brain-idleness which only a brain-worker can know; the cares and interests of a large city parish, with its dependent missions, were for the moment gone, and the pastor rested as he worked, fully. But Elizabeth needed no rest. She was charged with an overplus of vitality, energy unemployed made her restless, and urged her to numerous daring freaks. She proposed joining the hunting expeditions to Sandusky Bay; she was seized with a desire to visit the uninhabited Sister Islands, dimly visible on the horizon; she

was sure that the grapes on Rattlesnake were sweeter than those in the vineyards near the hotel; why not try a midnight sail, or a sunrise fishing-party? To all of which Mr. Harper returned a lethargic "*Cui bono?*" and remained lying at ease upon the rocks, listening to the wash of the wavelets, and gazing dreamily off over the blue lake.

That evening Elizabeth had remarked, "I hate a humdrum life."

"Only humdrum people have humdrum lives," answered Frederick, sketching a little profile on a smooth lake-pebble.

"I hate humdrum people, then," pursued Elizabeth.

"So do I; that is, I am not fond of them."

"Every thing here is humdrum."

"What! This lovely view?"

"Yes, and every thing at Lakeport also," continued the young lady, aggressively.

"Sad for Lakeport," answered the young clergyman, shading the countenance of his pebble portrait.

"There is no chivalry left in the world."

"But plenty of self-sacrifice."

"There is no romance."

"But plenty of love."

"I do not believe it," said Elizabeth, shortly. Now, Frederick might have gone on a mission then and there, and converted this unbeliever, but he was indolent, and so only smiled.

"I see nothing of it," continued Miss Pyne, advancing a step farther in search of excitement, going, indeed, to the extreme limit of her domain. No sooner had she thus spoken, than she became painfully aware of the significance of her words; but confusion changed rapidly into anger, when she perceived that no advantage was taken of them. An advance unnoticed, a retreat unpursued, are both mortifying. She waited a full minute, while Frederick Harper tranquilly darkened the eyelashes of his little stone face; then she rose and walked down the beach, angry with the world, with herself, but most of all with the tall, dark young man she left behind her. Frederick said to himself, "I will follow her in a moment," and went on with his sketch; to do him justice, he had no idea she was angry, for he had not taken in the full meaning of her words. Busy, practical men require some strong excitement to tone them up to all the infinite and delicate variations of a woman's feelings and moods; but there was no excitement in the hazy evening air, and, besides, the brain-worker was enjoying his annual rest. So he tarried. And when he followed, she was gone.

Around the rock-corner, out of sight, Elizabeth rowed her skiff, and the water showed no trace. She had never ventured out alone so late in the day, and therefore the masculine mind thought not of such a possibility; but what is precedent to a woman of the quicksilver type! "I will row over to the Rattlesnake," she said to herself, "it is but a short distance;" and the daring idea chimed in with her angry mood. She settled to her oars, and was soon far out in the lake. The Snake was four miles away, lying in the water with his two rattles behind; the sunset glow faded, the twilight grew dusky, clouds rolled

up from the west, and still the girl rowed on. She was lost in reverie, and rowed mechanically. Gradually, however, she became aware that it took more force to pull back the oars, and that the strain on her hands was heavier. She glanced around; it was night on shore, but on the water the light lingers late, a bank of black clouds was rising slowly in the west, and a swell setting in from the outside showed that beyond the islands there was a sea running. The Snake was nearer now than the Hotel-island, and Elizabeth, no longer in a reverie, bent to her oars, and often turned her head, steering the skiff so as not to lose an inch on her way. She was not alarmed, for she was a skilful oarswoman, but she had no wish to be driven out to sea, and rescued by some prosaic old lumber-barge. If it were a yacht, now, or a privateer! But Lake Erie has no such romantic craft.

Heavier grew the swell, and darker the sky, crests of foam appeared here and there, and at last the wind got into the island-corner, and wound in and out through the archipelago, bringing the waves in its track. The Snake was not far distant, but its head hissed angrily as the wind struck it and raised the seething foam. The landing was on the outer side, and Elizabeth hesitated an instant; but the angry daring which had taken her out, took her on, and she ventured. Another moment, and the skiff was swept out to sea. She kept the boat's head in the wind and counted the chances; there were, however, but three: to outride the storm; to turn and row back to the Hotel-island; or to land on Ballast, whose range-light shone out ahead. Ballast Islet was the outpost of the group; beyond was the open lake. She decided for Ballast.

Half an hour passed, and a pale girl sat in a skiff driving before the wind, which was fast growing into a gale; the sea was high, and the skiff plunged and rocked, but she kept it on its course and sat with her head turned, intently watching. Ballast was near, but too far to the left. The wind would not take her, as she had hoped, far up on its sandy beach—she must turn and row sideways across the current of the wind and water. Could she do it? It was all Lake Erie against one pair of rounded arms. Elizabeth was alarmed now. She recognized the storm. It was the so-called equinoctial—the September gale which surely rides over the lake sooner or later, and cannot be mistaken when it comes. Yearly, Erie is strewn with the wrecks of this storm, whose approach is masked in soft, purple haze, and whose departure is followed by brilliant sunshine, as if in mockery of the victims. There is a fatality about the equinoctial on the Lower Lakes; no one ever expects it. "Not to-day," say the sailors; "not to-day," say the pleasure-travellers; and that very night their souls are required of them.

Elizabeth, a child of the lake-country, had realized during this last half-hour that the year had come; her face was pale and pinched, her round hat had gone, and her hair floated unheeded around her shoulders; only her eyes and her arms seemed alive as she watched and rowed. Rocks lay jagged around Ballast; there was but one landing,

a short strip of sloping beach, and on either side rocky needles and hooks to tear the boat in pieces, and deep water to drown its one passenger. The chances now were but one, and that a slender one. To outride the three days' gale, to go back to the Hotel-island, were both impossible; there remained only the dangerous alternative of a landing on the narrow beach. Nearer and nearer swept the skiff, the moment was almost there. Elizabeth thought of—her sins? Of her guardian-angel? No; she thought of Frederick Harper, who took the place of both. "He will mourn for me if I am drowned," she thought, pathetically. And with that she seized the oars tightly, and, bracing her feet, turned the skiff short to the left, bending double with her effort to force the boat broadside to the wind, across the current. It was a mighty effort for a girl, but she did not covet the being mourned for, if it could be prevented. The tense muscles on her arms, and blisters on her hands, showed that. A short and desperate contest. But the well-developed physique, the superabundant vitality and electricity that tormented her in the idleness of peace, gained the victory in this war with the elements, and, panting for breath, with singing noises in her head and blood-spots dancing before her eyes, Elizabeth Pyne beached the skiff with a last tremendous stroke, and, gaining the higher ground behind, sank exhausted on the grass. Vertigo swam in her brain for some moments, then followed a lethargic faintness, and gradually a chill crept through her frame, and she felt the pain of strained muscles and blistered palms. Rising wearily she started for the light-house. But the light was an old-man-of-the-mountain—visible only from a distance; though she had guided her course by its twinkle for the last half-hour, once upon the island, it vanished. It was dark, and the wind sounded among the trees with a wild cry; tired, cold, and disheartened, the girl wandered on at random, looking for the light, and thinking of Frederick Harper. She derived some comfort in the thought that he was probably "perfectly distracted." In reality, however, Mr. Harper was comfortably seated on the sheltered piazza watching the on-coming storm; he supposed that Elizabeth had followed one of her freaks and immured herself in her own room for the evening. He missed her, of course, and he allowed himself to hope that after their marriage there would be fewer of these freaks. This settled, he had an evening cigar of peace.

In the mean time, poor Elizabeth wandered on, her little kid boots torn and wet, her summer dress a trailing, tattered train, holding her hair with one hand to keep herself from Absalom's fate, and with the other guarding her face from the trees and bushes unseen in the darkness. She was exhausted and miserable, and on the verge of hysterics; but of course she could not have hysterics all alone, no one ever did. At last, when she had been dragging herself about for more than an hour, her tired eyes caught a low-down gleam. "The keeper's house," she thought, and a glow surprised her cold veins;

she was still alive. But it was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp; again and again she lost the light, and again and again it gleamed out in an unexpected quarter, for in the darkness she made many circles. At last the cabin came into view, or rather its window, and, without trying to find the door, Elizabeth tapped on the curtained pane. Another minute, and she was under a roof, and face to face with a fire. Then she had her hysterics.

Through it all she was dimly conscious that a woman was tending her; the wet boots were taken off, her hair smoothed, and her bruised hands bound up in soft balm. Then the warmth of the fire began to soothe, and a fragrant aroma to arouse her, and finally she dried her tears, and drank the hot coffee with eagerness. A state of beatitude followed, and she fell asleep.

Late in the evening, when the storm was fierce, Elizabeth's aunt appeared on the piazza. "Bessie! Bessie!" she cried. "Come in, child. You will take cold."

"Elizabeth is not here, Miss Sage," answered Frederick Harper, rising; "she has been in her room all the evening."

"Indeed," replied Aunt Anne, retreating out of the wind; then to herself, "I wonder if they have quarrelled?" For Aunt Anne, like most maiden aunts, fancied clergymen, and looked forward to the position of oracle in the parish, and the head directorship of sewing-societies. A few moments later she came running down the hall, with her cap-strings floating behind her. "She is not there, Mr. Harper," she cried; "the door is locked, and the key under the mat, as usual. She has not been there since afternoon."

Then came confusion and anxiety, many tongues and many suggestions. "Could she have strayed—?" "Could she have fallen—?" "Could she have ventured—?" but no one ended his question, for the cliffs were abrupt, and the rocks below cruel. At last a boy was found, who said, "She went out in a skiff at sunset; I saw her pass the point."

This was worse than all. "Elizabeth, Elizabeth!" cried Aunt Anne. "Elizabeth is drowned!"

"No," answered Frederick Harper, in a voice that startled the chattering crowd; "she is not dead." And he ran out into the darkness, taking the path that led down to the dock.

The crowd gazed after him, and then, with that impulse that leads a crowd to follow a master-spirit, out they streamed into the wild night, these summer visitors from the city, and ran down to the shore.

Some fishermen sat in the boat-house, mending their nets by the light of a coal-oil lamp. They heard the story, and shook their heads. "It is the equinox, and it'll last three days," they said. "Nothing can go out of harbor to-night." Money was offered; but "Life is more than money," replied old Commodore Perry, an aged fisherman, whose name, happening to be the same as that of the hero of Lake Erie, the summer visitors had adorned with the gallant officer's title, and amused themselves gravely questioning the old man as to the battle and its incidents, until he almost believed he had taken part.

"I believe it was at one o'clock precisely,

commodore, that you wrote your famous dispatch, 'We have met the enemy, and we are theirs,' said one.

"No, no," interrupted another; "at one, the commodore crossed in a small boat, amid the terrific broadsides of the iron-clads, bearing in his hand a pennon containing these words, 'If any man attempts to shoot up the American flag, haul him on the spot!'"

"You're both wrong," remarked a third. "At one, the commodore was lashed to the main-mast, and proposed 'To fight it out in those lines, if it took all summer.'"

"Nothing of the kind," added a fourth. "The commodore was about to leave, his trunks were all packed, when Pontiac and Tecumseh came off in a small boat, and cried, with tears, 'Don't give up the ship!' So he didn't."

"Jess so, gentlemen," the old fisherman would reply, "jess so." But, now that there was an end of chaffing, and real danger abroad, the commodore, unlike his prototype, drew back; "Life is more than money, gentlemen," he said. "Ef one of the steamers was in, we might venture; but we can't tempt the equinox in a sail-boat."

"What are you doing, Harper?" said one. "I am going out in the Pickerel," answered a voice from the end of the dock.

Then arose a chorus of remonstrance, wonder, and alarm; each person had something to say against the idea; only Aunt Anne held her peace. "He is mad." "He can never find her; they will both be lost." "A boat cannot live in such a gale." "He must not be allowed to go."

Through this shower of words Frederick worked on. Then, without answer, he pushed off and set sail. The wind whistled over the island, and the lake was black; they could only see the boat a short distance, then it vanished into the darkness. "He is lost." "He will never return." "Such a strong young life!" "So earnest and so eloquent!"

Thus the requiem was chanted. But Aunt Anne went quietly back through the grove. "I shall see them both again," she said to herself; and, in the strength of this faith, she slept quietly through the long, wild night.

Frederick Harper was a good sailor on both salt- and fresh-water; let it be understood, also, that being the one does not by any means imply the other. He knew the position of the islands, and could make his way among them without the aid of daylight; such knowledge, however, was but slight help in a storm like this. "How can he tell which way she went?" said Junior-warden Graham, as he turned back toward the house. "Such an expedition is beyond all reason." And it was. But love is not always reasonable, fortunately for the poetry of life. Frederick Harper literally could not stay in safety on shore when Elizabeth Pyne was in danger on the water; that was the whole truth.

Out he sailed over the bay, and passing the "Parsons' Snug-harbor," dimly seen through the darkness (not forgetting, even then, to dislike it as a Low-Church institution), he turned into the broad water beyond, running before the wind under a jib. His plan was to approach each island by turn; something would

tell him if he came near her. Is this superstitious? Is it not rather a kind of desperate faith? He never once admitted the idea that Elizabeth might never have reached the land at all. . . .

After a short but profound sleep Elizabeth awoke and gazed around the little room. A drift-wood fire crackled on the hearth, and a candle burned in the window; wooden chairs and tables, a clock, the settle on which she lay, and a few cooking-utensils, completed the furniture; but the whole was in blossom. Flowers were everywhere—in boxes, pots, and baskets, on shelves, on the floor, hanging from the ceiling, and climbing over the plastered walls—all kinds, the rare and the common, the hot-house princess, and the way-side peasant, the rose, the fuchsia, and the orange-blossom, side by side with the flower-de-luce, the daisy, and even the red clover. All blossoms, with as little green as possible; the leaves seemed to have been pruned away to make room for the flower. "That poor rose—all its leaves are gone," said Elizabeth, dreamily.

"Oh, you're awake, are ye? I'm glad, for I want to know which side to set the watch-fire on," said a voice. It was a woman who spoke, and Elizabeth turned and looked at her. She was a tall, slender person, with hair, eyes, and skin, of a pale yellow; only her clearly-cut profile kept her face from fading into nonentity. Small, rough hands peeped from the long, close sleeves, but the limp gown hung about her form in shapeless folds, and, altogether, she looked like a faded sunflower. Elizabeth took in all these details at a glance, after the manner of woman; and then she answered, "What for?"

"Why, you come from somewhere, I suppose, and your folks will be anxious after you, won't they? If you'll tell me which way you come from, I'll set a fire on that side, and they can see it."

"I came from Bass Island," said Elizabeth.

"Bass Island? I thought so. You're one of the city folks, I reckon. I'll set the fire on that side." The hostess left the room, and a few minutes later Elizabeth saw through the window a gleam, a shooting flame, and then a steady red glare. "It's set," said the woman, reëntering.

"Are you the light-house keeper's wife?" asked Miss Pyne, after a sleepy pause; both her ideas and words seemed to come slowly.

"I'm the keeper; there ain't no other that I know of."

"You live here?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I want to."

"Oh!" said Miss Pyne, gazing at this singular person, who wanted to live alone upon a Lake-Erie island. She was dimly conscious throughout this dialogue that she was not speaking with her usual courtesy, but she could command only the shortest phrases. She was not herself—she was somebody else; she felt that her questions had belonged to country-bred curiosity. After a pause, she

solved the puzzle: "You put something in my coffee," she said, slowly.

"Yes; yarbs to make you sleep."

"Oh!" said Elizabeth again, too hazy to push the investigation further. "What is your name?" she continued, after a pause, returning to the laconic curiosity produced apparently by the "yarbs."

"Jonah—Miss Jonah!"

"That is a man's name; no woman ever had it."

"I have it."

"I don't believe it is your name at all," pursued Elizabeth, after pondering a while.

"Well, then, don't. It's no consequence."

"Where did you get all those flowers?" said the visitor, abandoning the subject of the name.

"Growed 'em."

"Why do you keep them in the house in summer?"

"'Cause I want to."

"I wish my head would stop whirling," said Elizabeth, abandoning the flowers also, and turning wearily upon the settle.

"Eat a bit, and then you'll doze and sleep it all off," said the light-keeper, rising. She busied herself among the dishes and over the fire, and Elizabeth dreamily wondered over her yellow hue and extreme length; she seemed half a mile long to the dazed visitor. At length came a bowl of broth, a piece of pilot-bread, and a cup of coffee. "No yarbs this time," said the yellow woman, smiling, and, after eating, the tired girl fell asleep. She was awakened suddenly by a vigorous shake. "Some one's off the island," said the light-keeper. "I heard him hollering on the wind. Is there anybody such a fool as to sail out after you in such a storm?"

"Yes," answered Elizabeth, springing up; "but you need not call him a fool."

"Pretty near it, I reckon. You want to go, too, do you? There's a shawl and some shoes."

The two women went out into the night. The beacon-fire blazed brightly and flared in the wind, dazzling Elizabeth's eyes so that she saw nothing but flame-spots in every direction; but the yellow woman's eyes were like the eyes of a cat. "There, there," she cried, "a little sloop! If they don't run upon this beach they're gone, sure. Come along, girl." And snatching a brand from the fire, she ran down to the sand. Elizabeth followed her example, and the two took their stations, one at each end of the little harbor, like two pier-lights, to show the way. By this time the sleep, the excitement, and the cold air, had overcome the narcotic, and Elizabeth began to realize her love and her mortal fear. Frederick Harper was in the boat, and death was very near him. She never doubted that it was he. "Two minutes more," said the yellow woman, "and either we or the lake will have them, poor fellows!"

As it is in drowning, all her past life seemed to glide before Elizabeth's eyes during those two minutes, and she saw her own faults standing out in glaring colors against the earnest, active good wrought by her lover. "Spare him," she prayed silently, and gazed with anguish out into the darkness before her.

"Halloa!" shouted the yellow woman.—

"Shout, girl; now, both together!" And as the sloop came into the glare of the fire, the two shouted with all their might. The unseen sailor heard, for the little boat turned—a dangerous turn—and leaped forward, head-on toward the beach. Another half-moment, and the yellow woman had plunged into the water, waist-deep, and, clutching the bow with the strength of a man, dragged it ashore, while Frederick Harper, all unmindful of her help, sprang out and clasped Elizabeth in his arms.

The woman hauled up the Pickerel, and made it fast to the rocks; then, "Well, folks," she said, "when you get through, we'll go back to the house. I'm a little damp myself." The "getting through" consisted of broken exclamations, half-uttered questions, and answers all astray. The yellow woman listened a while, and then she said, half to herself, "But they'll never get through. I might have known it. I'll go and get things ready for them." So off she started in her dripping clothes, holding a brand for a lantern, and the lovers unconsciously followed, entering the little house and sitting down upon the settle in the same trance—a pale girl, in a tattered dress and clumsy overshoes, and a young man, in wet clothes, with dripping hair, and worn, white face. Thus the light-keeper found them when she came from the inner room clad in a dry gown. "Chills and fever, sure," she said. "Goodness, children, you don't even know you're wet, I suppose!—Young man, if you'll step into the outer room, you'll find old Kit's best clothes laid out on a chair."

"Madam," said Frederick Harper, coming out of his trance, "we owe our lives to you; Elizabeth and I—"

"Let that debt wait," interrupted the yellow woman, "and get dry things on you, do. I ain't a madam, either; Jonah's my name, Miss Jonah. There's the door."

The young man obeyed the pointing finger, and Miss Jonah rattled among her cooking-utensils. "You'd better help; it will warm you up," she said to Elizabeth. "What can you cook?"

Miss Pyne hesitated, and mentally ran over the list of her culinary accomplishments.

"Thought so," said Miss Jonah, severely. "What's the good of your hands?"

This remark opened a door of escape to the visitor. "My hands are blistered; I cannot use them over the fire," she said.

"Don't believe you can cook, all the same," answered the hostess, bending over the coals.

"Yes, I can."

"What?"

"Oh—oh—cream-pies," said Elizabeth, bringing out her one dish in triumph.

"Cream-pies!" echoed Miss Jonah, contemptuously. "Will they save the nation?"

"Does the nation need saving?" asked the visitor, amused with the oddities of the light-keeper.

"It did a short time ago, child.—At least, can you set a table?"

"Yes; but my dress hangs about my feet, and I cannot walk in these great shoes."

"Well, you do look like the 'draggie-tail Gypsies, O!' I haven't any Sunday clothes, as old Kit has, but you can help yourself

to whatever there is in the press. Take the candle. I can cook by the firelight."

When Miss Pyne came back, she was transformed into a Würtemberg peasant-girl. One of the light-keeper's straight blue gowns hung about her; she wore a white kerchief over her shoulders and an apron tied close up under her arms; her hair was braided in the German style, and a handkerchief tied quaintly around her head, and in her blooming beauty she looked sixteen, and a princess in masquerade.

"Well, you-ns do know more than we-ns," said Miss Jonah, setting down her basin to gaze.

"If I only had buckled shoes," said Elizabeth, holding out a little stockinged foot.

"You've managed to make a fancy dress out of my old duds; what won't vanity do? But I don't blame you, child; and as for shoes, I can fix that." And, stepping to a chest, Miss Jonah brought out a pair of black-satin slippers, of the style of 1800, somewhat worn, but dainty still.

"Oh, the beauties!" cried Elizabeth, slipping them on, and looking at her feet with admiration.

"My grandmother's," said Miss Jonah. "Now, can you set the table?"

"Certainly; motion becomes a pleasure in such fairy godmother slippers," answered Miss Pyne, gayly.

When, after some delay, Frederick Harper returned, he found a midnight meal ready on the table, decked with a central mound of blossoms. Fish, potatoes, hoe-cake, bacon, smoking hominy, pilot-bread, and honey. All these, and a Würtemberg peasant-girl in satin slippers as waitress.

"How charming!" exclaimed Frederick.

"How funny!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

For the young man had not the skill to transform himself into any thing but a bulky athlete, uncomfortably attired in clothes much too small for him, with a length of ankle, throat, and wrist, escaping from the well-worn garments.

"How tall you are!" said Elizabeth.

"None too tall," said Miss Jonah. "Little men are always a mistake; all you can do, make the best of 'em.—Help yourself, Fred."

"The Reverend Frederick Harper," said Elizabeth, quickly.

"And allow me, Miss Jonah, to introduce to you Miss Elizabeth Pyne," said the young clergyman.

"Yes, yes, I know. And now, Fred and Betsy, do eat something; it will be daylight before long."

The two guests glanced at each other in amusement. "Let me give you some fish, Betsy," said Frederick, smiling.

"The blooms don't look so bad on the table," remarked Miss Jonah, looking at the impromptu *épergne*. "I never thought of mixing flowers with victuals myself, though."

"You are fond of flowers," said Frederick.

"Yes; they're sisters and brothers to me, and more.—Well, you're through, are ye? Then just get to sleep as quick as you can. You'll find Kit's cot in the outer room, Fred. Good-night; I'll call you when breakfast is ready." And, holding open the door, she sent

out her guest in spite of his half-laughing objections.

"Now, Betsy, trot into the inner room and curl yourself up in the bed. I never like to see a girl get peaked for want of sleep."

"And you?" said Elizabeth.

"Oh, I am an owl," answered Miss Jonah. "Half the time I don't sleep nights at all;" and in the firelight, with her yellow eyes and pointed nose, she looked not unlike the night-bird. Elizabeth's watch showed one o'clock, and she fell asleep with a hazy cloud of owl-faces hovering around her.

The next morning the storm was at its wildest; all the winds were abroad, and the lake was white with flattened foam, the clouds flew across the sky with lurid gleams between. But, in spite of the gloom, the peasant-girl and the awkward athlete made good cheer within the little house, and found it impossible to feel depressed. "We ought to, you know," said Elizabeth at the breakfast-table. "No doubt they are sadly anxious at the hotel, and—and, we may have to stay here days."

"Dreadful," said Frederick, bringing the coffee-pot from the trevet on the hearth. "Ours is indeed a melancholy lot. Have some more coffee?"

In truth the friends at the hotel were sadly anxious; they clustered around the fire and said to each other: "How young they were!" "How well loved!" The past tense gave significance to their eulogies. Only Aunt Anne hoped on. The next evening after the long, sad day of storm, Commodore Perry covered himself with glory by bringing the tidings that a fisherman who lived around the point reported a beacon-light on Ballast. "The range is there as usual," he said to the listening group in the parlor, "but this here's a watch-fire on the beach, and it stands to reason it means something. Miss Jonah, she don't make bonfires for fun in weather like this."

"Miss Jonah?"

"Yes; the light-keeper's a woman, a lone, lorn female, that stays over on Ballast all the year round. She's queer, she is! Old Kit brings her victuals, and the like."

"One or both of them must be there," said Junior-warden Graham, hopefully.

"Both," said Aunt Anne.

The curious asked many questions about this recluse of Ballast, but the commodore had no more to say. "She lives there; that's all I know," he answered. He saw nothing surprising in the fact; he took the world as he found it, and was surprised at nothing, that wise old man!

All through the day the two on the island were happy, laughing, and enjoying the adventure like school-children. All through the day the yellow woman sat grimly by, and looked on. She allowed them to prepare dinner, and she ate their burned and dried-up concoctions with equanimity; she relieved them from the prosaic after-piece of dish-washing; she suffered a rearrangement of all her plants, and various improvements in the position of her furniture. She was amused, poor, lonely soul.

Toward night she rose, half reluctantly. "Well, I must go out, milk the cow, light the

range, and set the watch-fire," she said, taking down a pail.

"I will go too," said Elizabeth. "I want to feel the storm."

"Not in my grandmother's slippers, Betsy."

"The slippers shall not be injured," said the athlete, and he lifted the peasant-girl in his arms. "Now, then, for the storm."

"Well, you *are* strong," said Miss Jonah, approvingly. "I never did like puny people. Sit still, Betsy, and don't make a fuss. Can't you take a bit of fun, child?"

So the procession started in high glee, the storm was felt, the cow milked, the range lighted, the beacon-fire started, and, through it all, the grandmother's slippers never once touched the ground.

Then came supper and a merry evening; Frederick was even betrayed into a college-song.

"I can sing," said Miss Jonah.

"Pray favor us," urged the two guests; and she favored them: "Barbara Allen" and the ballad of the "Draggle-tail Gypsies, O!"

"You two are lovers, of course," she said, as late in the evening they still sat around the fire, listening to the wild wind outside. This sudden question brought the red to Elizabeth's face, but Frederick answered calmly:

"Of course."

"When are you going to be married?"

"In November."

"What day?"

"The 24th."

Now, be it known, that the word marriage had never yet been spoken by either of these two young persons. Elizabeth, with scarlet face, interposed a "No."

"Don't you make any objections, Betsy," said Miss Jonah, "for you know you like him."

"Of course she does," said the audacious Frederick.

"It is very late," said Elizabeth, hastily, rising and taking a candle. "Good-night." And so she escaped.

The opening of the next day was gloomy with gusts of heavy rain; the gay mood had passed, and Elizabeth sat silently at the little window, gazing out over the dark, stormy water. She had slept little, and her mind was divided between two feelings—pleasure that would not down, and anger that would not up, at least to the desired point. She loved Frederick Harper, and she knew that she loved him; but her proud spirit chafed against this easy conquest. Should it be for him to win without difficulty? Was she his without even an asking? And all the time she knew she was, and had hard work to keep herself up to the proper indignation; which last was the most humiliating of all.

But Frederick, who had risked his life for this girl and counted it as nothing, thought not of moods and fancies; he rested content with his great thankfulness for life and love.

The day wore on, and the three were quiet, Elizabeth moody; the yellow woman quietly watchful, and Frederick lapsing back into that lethargy of complete rest, which had been so rudely broken.

"To-morrow you can go home," said Miss Jonah, toward evening. "The wind will go down some time to-night, and Kit will be coming across from Middle Bass as soon as the sea goes down; he can take you back."

"Don't you think I am a good sailor, Miss Jonah?" said Frederick, smiling.

"Yes; but you'll have to look after her; she's out of sorts," with a gesture toward Elizabeth, who stood in the inner room, looking out at the rain.

"Is she ill," asked Frederick, rising quickly.

"Young man," said Miss Jonah, in a low voice, "I can't bear to see trouble growing out of nothing. She feels bad, and, of course, you're the cause, somehow. Now, you just go right in there and make up." And Frederick went.

"Well, children, supper's ready, and can't wait," called a voice through the half-open door, an hour afterward.

Forth came the lovers at their hostess's summons, and Elizabeth was radiant, with the traces of tears still on her cheeks. For Frederick had then and there been on a mission, and converted this unbeliever. There was no uncertainty about the asking now. O Miss Jonah, you did bravely as a Cupid!

The yellow woman busied herself about the table, and seemed not to see this new radiance; but all the same she sighed when they were not observing her, and pressed her hand to her head.

"This is our last evening," she said, as, the work over and fresh drift-wood heaped on the fire, she sat down in her splint rocking-chair with her knitting.

Outside the wind was still rushing through the sky, and the watch-fire burned on the beach; inside the two were together on the settle, making quarrels with their words and love with their eyes, after the manner of young persons who "understand each other." The hostess sat opposite, and listened, and looked.

"Miss Jonah," said Frederick, remembering at last that there was a third, "you do not, of course, remain here during the winter?"

"Yes, I do, Fred."

"But is it not dreary and lonely?"

"Dreary and lonely, dreary and lonely," repeated the woman; "God knows it is!" And two tears rolled slowly down her yellow cheeks.

"Dear Miss Jonah," said Elizabeth, taking her hand, "do not stay here. Come with us to Lakeport."

"No, no, child. I must keep my place."

"I can easily find a better place for you in Lakeport," said Frederick. "Come back with us. Let us help you to make a home in the city near ours, where we can often see you."

"Do," pleaded Elizabeth, bending down her happy, winsome face—"do, my dear." And she kissed the faded cheek.

Miss Jonah burst into tears, and rocked herself to and fro.

"It is so long since any one has kissed me, so long since any one has called me 'dear!'" she said, with sobs. "It isn't easy to be dead before you've died. If I was

really dead, I shouldn't be hungering after what can't be. At least, I hope not. Else, what's the use of death? Children, you've opened my heart to-night, and I'll tell you my story. Then, perhaps, you'll help me to end every thing right." She wiped her eyes, and motioned them back to the settle. "Sit there like you was before," she said. "'Twas seeing you so happy that first set me off. I don't begrudge you, my dears; but even the poorest human creature has its feelings."

"I was born in Northern Georgia, near the mountain called Yonah. We were poor, but not exactly poor white trash, for we came from a good stock, and grandmother was a real lady. I went to school some, and didn't have to work hard. My name was Rose; I look like it, don't I? Well, at eighteen I was engaged to Joe; and, seven years after, I was still only engaged, for he was too poor to marry. Mattie, my sister, was seventeen, and I loved her dearly. She was a pretty blossom of a child, like that carnation-pink in the window. I had taken care of her all ways, for we had no mother, and father had died when she was still young. Well, all at once a far-away cousin died, and left her farm up in the hills to me—a queer old body like I am now, I suppose. Joe had not been in that evening, and I sat working in the keeping-room, burning to tell him the good news. Still, he didn't come. At last, I got nervous, and thought I'd feel better out in the garden, where I could hear the gate creak. I went out; I didn't hear the gate creak, but I heard something else—Joe and Mattie, he talking, she crying, and both of 'em loving each other with all their hearts. Yes; I couldn't mistake. He spoke to her as he never spoke to me; his very voice was tenderer. And Mattie, too—the child was breaking her heart. Through it all they both stood firm. He had no thoughts of giving me up; she had no thoughts of getting him away. It was only that they had happened to meet, and misery will out. If either of 'em had been false—but no. I couldn't even have the comfort of anger. It stood just this way: Joe had given me a boy's fancy, but Mattie he loved; she loved him with all her heart; and I—well, I was only in the way. I won't take the time to tell you all I thought, but this is what I did: I got a little bundle of things that I set store by—things that wouldn't be missed; those slippers is one, for I was vain of my foot, and had planned to be married in 'em—and then I went to the river, and threw my shawl over so it would lodge on the reeds. I wasn't an hour doing it all; and, while they were still in the garden, I was coming North. I've never been back, and I never mean to go. After a time, I got on this island, and here I'm going to stay. I like it. It's lonely, but I'm best alone. In the war I helped the prisoners over there a bit—the boys on Johnson's Island down in the bay, the Johnny Rebs, you know. I was something of a nurse, and I used to take care of the sick ones. 'Twas all for the sake of old Georgia. But peace came; the boys are home again; and the barracks are gone from Johnson's. Since then I've taken to flowers. We're pining creatures, after all; we must have something to

fuss over. Well, I don't even know if my two are married, but I did the best I could. I'm drowned, you see, and the farm is Mattie's. All I care for now is to have the end all right. I have a fancy I shall not live long, and I want to be buried here on Ballast. There mustn't be any stone or even a mound, for I want to be clean forgotten; and this is what I ask you two to do for me."

"O Miss Jonah," said Elizabeth, earnestly, "give up these gloomy ideas, and come with us!"

"Eh, child, you're kind, but I couldn't be happy nowhere; I can't make myself over."

"But we will write—we will send to your old home—"

"No, no. I can stand being away from Joe, but I couldn't stand being near him. I love him the same as ever. You look at me with your pretty eyes wide open, but it's so. I suppose I seem an old woman to you. I'm forty-two; but if I was seventy it would be just the same."

"But, Miss Jonah, at least you can know—"

"I don't want to know, child. All I have to do is just keep still. If I have done wrong, it can't be mended now; if I have done right, it mustn't be spoiled."

"But, dear Miss Jonah—"

"Stay, Elizabeth," interposed Frederick Harper, "this is a question we cannot answer. Miss Jonah must judge for herself."

"Yes, young man. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. Good-night."

And, passing through the outer door, Miss Jonah left them, nor did they see her again that evening. She did not enter the room where Elizabeth slept, and, although the clergyman watched late before the fire, she did not appear. In the morning, however, there she was, not the broken-voiced, sad woman who had told her story as if she longed for sympathy, but pale, grim Miss Jonah, the light-keeper of Ballast Island.

"We have been dreaming," said Elizabeth, in a low tone. "Those hard, yellow eyes never shed tears."

"It is that very stony endurance that I pity most," answered Frederick. "It is her armor against suffering, and shows how long and hard has been the battle."

Old Kit, the fisherman, came across from Middle Bass early in the afternoon. The sky was drifted with ragged clouds, the lake rough, and the air cold; but the storm was over. Frederick and Elizabeth were now attired in their own shrunken clothes, but the kid boots were hopelessly torn. "Keep the slippers," said Miss Jonah; "I like to see 'em on you."

The yellow woman had held herself aloof from her guests during the day; she seemed in a sombre mood, and averse to any conversation. "I do not like to go away without a word as to what she told us last night," said Elizabeth, as old Kit made ready the Pickrel for the voyage to the Hotel-island. "Poor soul!—see how lonely she looks!"

"We have tried several times this morning, and she has refused to speak; we must not force ourselves upon her," answered Frederick. "She knows we are going; if she wishes to say any thing, she will come. Telling her story was a relief at the time; but

she has been in a dumb agony ever since. Last night she was out in the wind wandering up and down on the beach like a wild creature; she did not come in until dawn."

"Let me go and comfort her," said the warm-hearted Elizabeth, looking with tearful eyes toward the solitary figure on the rocks.

"No, dear. No one can comfort her. But I think she will come to us when the boat is ready to sail." And she did.

"Good-by, children," she said, quietly. "I have trusted you with my all, but I know you will not betray me. I should like to ask you, if word comes, to help me in the end; but—it might be troublesome."

"Dear friend," said Frederick, taking the cold hand in both his own, "life is uncertain; you may outlive us both."

"And, may not."

"In that case, freely do I give my promise."

"God bless you," said Miss Jonah, solemnly. They pressed each other's hands in farewell, and then Elizabeth threw her arms around the yellow woman's neck and kissed her.

"Oh, my little blossom," cried Miss Jonah, with tears, "may you be happy, ever so happy, my sweet one!" She turned away, and Frederick lifted Elizabeth over the wet sand and placed her in the boat, already rising and falling on the surf, as if impatient to be off.

"All ready," said old Kit.

Miss Jonah did not turn, and Frederick, seeing her purpose, gave the sign, and the boat glided away from the little log dock out into the broad lake. When a wide space of water lay between them, Miss Jonah climbed upon a rock and stood gazing after the sloop, her tall form outlined against the gloomy sky. As a change in the course hid her from view, the two watchers in the boat saw her hand waving a last farewell. . . .

No need to tell of the joy at the Hotel-island. "I knew they would return," said Aunt Anne, triumphantly.

Early the next morning the little island steamer, weather-bound at Sandusky, ventured out, and carried back on her return voyage to the main-land every summer visitor. The islands were left to themselves until another summer; but their grapes and their wine kept their memory warm through the long, cold winter.

Early in the spring, when ice was still floating in the lake, the Rev. Frederick Harper received a letter:

"DEAR CHILDREN: I feel that death is not far off. When I am gone Kit will mail this, and then wait. Keep your promise. Good-by, both of you."

"MISS JONAH."

"Will you go with me?" he said, giving the letter to his wife.

"Yes," answered Elizabeth.

Reaching Sandusky, they took a little sloop and sailed out over the cold lake toward Ballast Island. Old Kit was waiting for them, and in the house was a closed box.

"She didn't want you to see her again," said the old man. "She made me promise to nail it up; she made herself ready beforehand."

The flowers were blooming on the walls, and the plain furniture ranged in order.

"Was there any message?" asked Frederick.

"Nothing, sir, 'cept her love for the lady, and would she take a few slips from the plants, 'cause she'd like to think they was blooming in your house. That's all, sir."

Reverently the burden was lifted and carried out to a spot among the trees, where the grave stood ready. Then the young clergyman read the burial service; "earth to earth, ashes to ashes," and Elizabeth's hand threw in the first clods. Before the grave was filled, she gathered all the flowers and dropped them down, so that the coffin-lid was buried in blossoms. Then the earth was restored to its place, and the ground smoothed and sodded; "No stone, no mound," the solitary woman had said, and her wish was fulfilled. A few weeks more, and no one could trace the outline of the grave in the fresh, spring grass.

Taking with them the flower-slips, the two sailed away, leaving old Kit in charge. Long they talked of the dead as they sailed back over the cold lake.

"I think," said Elizabeth, "that she took the name of that Georgia mountain, and the people about here misunderstood it and called it Jonah."

"Very likely," said Frederick; "she probably thought it best not to correct the mistake. Yonah—Jonah; yes, they are much alike."

"Poor soul, she is at rest now," said the young wife at last. "But, after all, did she do right?"

"Who can tell?" answered Frederick, gravely. "She gave her life for the sake of those she loved. If the sacrifice was mistaken, it was none the less heroic."

This was Miss Jonah's funeral sermon.

The wind was adverse, and the afternoon was darkening into night, as the sail-boat glided on toward Sandusky Bay.

"See, there is the range shining out," said Elizabeth, looking back; "old Kit lights it now."

Another turn, and Ballast Island disappeared.

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

LIFE IN SANTO DOMINGO CITY.

LIFE in the tropics is pretty nearly the same all the world over, but the city of Santo Domingo, thanks to the peculiar temperature of the island, can hardly be called tropical. It is true, that there are cocoapalms and bananas on every side, and that the castor-bean grows as a weed, but yet the heat is never very great, and, what is still more strange, the sun does not rush vehemently to his rest. On the contrary, he lingers below the horizon, and gives us that delicious twilight which the Germans poetically call the after-glow. Now, in your genuine tropical countries it is a characteristic feature that there is only a minute's after-shine, and then the earth, with all its flowers, is wrapped in that blanket of the night of which