BLACK POINT.

THE most subtle charm of Florida, excelling, I am inclined to think, even its May-like Christmas, and June in February, is found in the absence of the atmosphere of labor, either in the present or the past. One there forgets that this is a working-day world; and it is the only part of the United States in which one does forget it. The rich man at the North labors not, but he can not enter his carriage without seeing the man who does; even the railroad skirting the lawn of his country residence brings with it, though unseen, suggestions of the grimy brakesman and watching engineer—men who toil and fare hardly every day of their lives. Through the South at the present day, though there may be little of the bustle and energy of labor, there is in its place a silence of disappointment, often a torpor of regretful memories, which as effectually as the presence of toil prevents the formation of that atmosphere of indolence—indolence unpursued by disapproving conscience—which is Florida's deepest charm. It is not rest, for rest follows labor. Here is no labor, and never was; the poor are the most indolent of all. No ice, no snow, no stern frozen ground, drive them to toil to save themselves from suffering. With wood in the forest for their small fires, with fish in the brown rivers, why should they strive or save? Here at last is a country where there is no "must."

True, active Prosperity has never had her home there, for active Prosperity works hard; but care-free hours, the slow enjoyment of each day for itself alone as it dawns and fades over the winterless earth—these are to be found and possessed on that narrow peninsula, with its olive-green woods, its slow chocolate-hued streams, its white sands, and the limitless barrens, whose uselessness for all utilitarian purposes gives them a wild peculiar charm, granted to them forever, prairies of green, with their pines standing wide apart, and bright little tropical flowers growing up with all the haste they can on long hair-like stalks, until they reach the level of the coarse grass, when they rest their chins on the tops of the rough blades, stop growing, and gaze contentedly around.

Black Point is no point at all; neither is it black. It is a sweep of broad beach, without any outlying islands or sand-bars, so that you have the satisfaction of knowing that the waves that break at your feet come from far away, your particular spot of coast being the first land they touch after leaving the Old World behind them. It would seem as though it might be pleasant for an ocean wave to feel the shore under his breast again, after weeks of tossing about in bottomless space. The Black Point beach is not straight; it forms a waving line along the coast, as its own white sands, pressed together by the action of the waves, form a smaller waving line at the water's edge. This waving line makes the beach a series of scallops, each with its half-moon of silver sand, its miniature cliff behind, crowned with Spanish-bayonets, its pile of drift-wood for a seat, and in front the limitless expanse of ocean, stretching across to Morocco. You sit down on the drift-wood, which has always been washed up close under the cliff; you gaze off over the sea; you feel alone with immensity; great thoughts begin to come. And then suddenly some one walks around into your scallop from the scallop next beyond, and you realize that you are not alone at all even with yourself, to say nothing of immensity. These scallops are always deceiving the unwary; each little rounded bay looks so wild and lonely that it takes a long series of winters at the Point to drill people into the remembrance that they are all within a mile or two of the house, and that when there is only one house in a place, its inmates are apt to make studies of each other, marine as well as land studies, to pass away the time.

But we wrong Black Point in alluding to time; there was no time there. Nobody made any especial plans, or had any especial hours. If you began to read a book in the morning, and found it interesting, you could read on all day until darkness came, and no one troubled himself or you with comment. If you happened to fall asleep on the beach, under your white umbrella, even though you slept on there all day, no one remarked upon it, or asked you why. The slavish necessity for doing any thing at any particular moment did not exist there. This remarkable absence of time and "why" was owing, first, to the influence of the place; second, to the determination of the people. The place was Florida, and Florida intensified: here was no work at all. The fields of the ancient sugar plantation to which the rambling old

house belonged, untilled for seventy years, were the only suggestions of labor; and they were more memories than suggestions. For miles around there was nothing save the wild warm barrens, the sunny wind-swept beach, and the unfettered lazy sea. The determination of the people, who were winter visitors from the North, was inflexible. They were people who knew what they wanted—a rare class; having found it, they guarded it vigilantly. The house was kept by Donna Teresa Valdez. Donna Teresa was born in Pennsylvania. Her original name was Amelia Jane. Having married a Florida sailor of Spanish descent, she had become a Valdez, and the winter visitors, to amuse themselves, had added the rest. She was a woman of forty, deeply sentimental, keen at a bargain, and imaginative enough to be able to comprehend what people wanted when it was once clearly explained to her—a rare quality; one to which she owed her present place. She had learned the general laxity required of her as regarded rules and fixed hours, and was now very carefully careless; she had also learned the general inflexibility upon one point, namely, the presence of good and well-cooked food on the table whenever the winter visitors came in from their conversations, meditations, sleep, or romance in the scallops, and demanded it. Now, as "whenever" meant almost continuously, breakfast thus expanded running into luncheon, and luncheon sweeping the confines of dinner, the Donna in actual fact led rather a hard life. But she was well paid, and in the realms of fancy she roamed uncontrolled. For she indulged herself with the idea that she was a young, inexperienced little thing, deserted by her husband, artless to a fault, and an object of deepest interest to all these Northern city people, who had the great distinction of a natural air of having come to the end of every thing, which, as is well known, is the surest proof of aristocracy. The Donna worked tremendously in her kitchen every morning, with voice and hands and head; she then came forth, and was an artless, inexperienced little thing the rest of the day. She was tall and angular, with pale blue eyes, and thin yellow hair worn in long lank curls, two on each side and four behind, reaching to her flat waist; she was generally attired in white, with an infantile green sash, and a spray of green leaves on her lonely bosom.

"Flowers are not for me," she said: "I am too sad-hearted. Leaves will do —leaves of a living green." And the visitors thought they would.

Black Point was not a resort; it was scarcely known at all save to these few people who came there year after year, and kept it to themselves. The attic of the old house was filled with their stored possessions: hammocks, oars, tents, sails, easels, bathing dresses, camp kettles, fishing tackle, guns, cases of wine, boxes of books—all the paraphernalia of people who understand how to thoroughly enjoy a Florida winter. Of course the party was not always the same; the same forty people could not always come to Florida. But those who filled the vacant places belonged to the same circle of society at home, so that it was merely a change of face, not of ideas, manner, or associations. There were few *young* young ladies; to the youthful mind it was not an attractive place. There was no dancing; there were no picnics, no occasions for pretty evening dresses. The people who went there were somewhat *blasé*. The women were all agreeable, and generally tired. The men were even more agreeable, and (as to the expression of their eyes) doubly and trebly weary. They had all been every where, and seen every thing. There was nothing new to them under the sun. But they did not ask any thing new, and as to the sun, it was what they came down there to enjoy; every body sat, or walked, or lay, or sailed, or slept, or swung in its rays all day long.

To this circle, one day in January, came the tidings that the engagement of Pierre Brandon and Eleanor Fordyce was at an end. Miss Fordyce had herself announced it to one of her friends, and Brandon had mentioned it in a word or two to one of his. This was at four o'clock, and at five every body knew it, even the people who had been asleep under white umbrellas on the beach. There were interest, curiosity, and comment—more of each than the Point had known for years; for it was an engagement of five years' standing, and no one who looked well at Eleanor could imagine that she could possibly, having once made her decision, change her mind. Brandon had no money, or rather what he considered was none, and Eleanor had but little. It had therefore been tacitly understood that they were waiting for an

estate which would come to Brandon after the death of a relative (if a grand-uncle-in-law can be called a relative) who had a life-interest in it. In December, soon after the arrival of the Florida colony, this old gentleman, who had comfortably enjoyed the money for eighteen years, died peacefully, aged eighty-seven, and the fortune was free. No one supposed that Brandon and Miss Fordyce would be in the least hurry about their plans; but no one supposed, either, that there would be the least change. But scarcely a month had passed, and now the Point saw its old, well-tried, approved, and accepted engagement broken, and no one could imagine the cause!

They all came to dinner rather more promptly than usual that day; it was the only sign they gave, and they were rather ashamed of it when they became conscious of what they had done. But when you have once entered a long dining-room, and every one has seen you enter, you can not very well turn around and go out. So they all sat down, and Brandon and Eleanor, when they came in, beheld the edifying spectacle of the whole forty eating fish at the same moment—an agreement of opinion not visible before in the whole annals of the house, where dinner generally continued for several hours, as people came and went according to their own convenience, the Donna smiling unflinchingly in her white dress at the head of the old pieced-out table. Eleanor was not with Brandon; a minute or two separated their entrances. The forty, although inwardly conscious of guilt, conversed as usual, each and all, without once looking, obtaining an exact impression of the faces, expressions, and tones of voice of the two actors in this new scene unrolled before them (tragedy? or comedy?—opinions varied); not an eyelash escaped them, not a comma.

Were these two so remarkable, then? Not especially; that is, where they were; for the whole forty were remarkable. There was not among them one awkward, stupid, inexperienced, or tiresome person. There were none of those terrible people, for instance, for whom the excuse has to be offered that they "mean well;" none of those who "feel it to be their duty" to tell you just what you do not want to hear; none of those who have a mission to regenerate any thing or any body; none of those who tell you what you "ought" to do. There might have been prodigals among them, but there certainly were no Pharisees. If they were epicurean, they were at least not selfish or dogmatic about it; others might not only freely enjoy themselves, but, rare liberty! in their own way. The secret of such an uncommon assemblage probably lay in the fact that all the women were, as regards beauty, fairly well endowed, and that all the men were possessed of an easy income. Money was required at Black Point; and a steady course of sea-beach and open piazza will gradually drive away the homely women. By the natural law of selection, they prefer more congenial places—the shaded light and high conversation of the reading club, the small value set on all earthly attractions which forms the prevalent atmosphere of the sewing society.

Pierre Brandon was thirty-eight; he had, however, one of those impassive blonde faces which do not betray age. His manner was quiet, his voice calm. He had a well-cut profile, but no one would have called him handsome. And he had no desire to be so called; beauty in men belonged, in his opinion, to adventurers, actors, and boys. Eleanor Fordyce was thirty; she had been engaged to Brandon five years. She was a slender, graceful woman, with pale complexion and the fine close-lying brown hair which no one notices in one way or the other. She had gray eyes and delicately cut features; and she was generally dressed in gray or black. At twenty she had looked as she did now; at forty she would look the same; while there was neither glow nor sparkle about her, one could no more imagine her with wrinkles or a withered skin than one could imagine it of a head in cameo. She had an intense love of music; she *felt* harmony as other people feel perfumes or salt air, that is, physically as well as mentally. But she could not sing, save in a low sweet voice too soft for use. For some unexplained reason she was more generally liked than many a woman who tries hard to please—more, perhaps, than she deserved. Yet, after all, people *are* right: if they continue firmly attached to a person after ten or twelve years of acquaintance, it is probably because there is in the character of that person a reality or sincerity of some sort of which they are sure, and upon which they know they could in an emergency rely.

The breaking of this engagement was incomprehensible to Black Point. Those two had known each other so thoroughly, had been so congenial in every way; the curious kind of simple content they felt in each other's presence had long been remarked. For there had been no outward ardor in the affair, no romantic isolation. They generally selected the very first scallop, so that every one going down the beach passed them, Eleanor sitting on a gray shawl, leaning back against the little cliff, Brandon lying at her feet smoking, his hat drawn over his eyes. Sometimes they had a book; but no one ever overheard them reading, scarcely talking. They seemed content simply to be together, and enjoy the ocean and Florida sky.

The engagement had been broken a week. The first wish of most persons under such circumstances is separation, absence; one or the other goes away. Not so Brandon and Eleanor; they had come to the Point for the winter, through the winter, therefore, they would remain. They met, of course, constantly; when it was necessary, they spoke a few formal words. But no one could detect either anger or regret in their voices or their eyes.

The second week came, and now the house was aroused by something else. Brandon was undoubtedly giving much of his time and attention to Lola Valdez.

Lola was a niece of the Donna's lost husband, but her mother, who was dead, was of Northern blood. She had never been at the Point before, having spent her life at one of the winter resorts on the St. Johns River. She was twenty, although the Donna called her sixteen; and she was very pretty. Her life had been a singular one, hardly to be matched in the land. Every winter for six years she had been admired and made love to, day after day, so that almost all her time had been occupied by it. Northern gentlemen, idling away winters on the sunny river, had said to her every thing that love's vocabulary holds. But whether she accepted their suit or whether she rejected it, sooner or later they all vanished away like smoke before the wind, leaving the little Florida beauty standing on her shore with nothing but a collection of adjectives to console her. At first surprised, then grieved, after a while she grew cynical. She avenged herself by being as cruel as possible to the lover of the moment, and earned the reputation of being thoroughly cold-hearted. Poor child! all she wanted was the pleasure and comfort of being warm-hearted under the safe sanction of the priest and the ring.

After an especially unhappy winter on the river, Lola had come to Black Point to stay with her aunt Amelia Jane. The Donna, deciding at a glance that their different styles of beauty would not interfere with each other, received her niece, made a sharp bargain with her as to the household labor that would be required of her from that hour, and then, business being over, threw her thin arms around her and embraced her effusively. "I feel as though you were almost my own dear Pedro in person," she sobbed; "the dear name harrows me. I am but a poor inexperienced little creature, struggling through the dreary world. We will be like two sisters. Call me Teresa, dear—the gentlemen have given me that name—and I will call you 'my bird.'"

As it was summer, when there were no visitors, the white dresses and green sash were packed away, and the Donna at the moment wore only an old brown calico and limp sun-bonnet, the latter in the house as well as out of it, in order to bleach out her complexion for the romance of the winter season. But Lola was not daunted by her aspect, or bewildered by her sentiment; one does not pass six winters at a resort on the St. Johns River without learning almost all there is in the way of human aspect and human sentiment, together with a good deal of human humbug thrown in. She now embraced her aunt in return with equal effusion, called her "Teresa" in her sweetest tones, and then, when left alone at last in the small room assigned to her, she locked the door and sat down by the window, looking out over the sea. She cared no more for the waves with their little cool fringes of foam than if they had been so much blank wall; but any man seeing her dark eyes at that moment would have been sure her soul was full of poetry, even though forever unexpressed. Lola herself sometimes wished that her "lustrous starry glance" could be turned into tangible arrows to shoot the gentlemen who praised her, who told her they adored her, yet never took her away from the poor life she led down there, who were so ready with "Can you love?" so slow with "Can you marry me?" She had made a firm vow to herself that here

at Black Point no one should dare to say one soft word to her. She knew the beginnings well, and would crush them with iron hand. But, to her surprise, she was not troubled. The people at the Point were of a different kind. Almost all the gentlemen there had some tried and agreeable friend among the ladies; the place bristled with old settled friendships, the comfortable kind that last into old age, both sides equally free, and therefore interested. Lola was surprised; but she said to herself that she was glad also. And in one way she was glad, for she was passionately weary of protestations that meant nothing, and admiration that never came to a definite avowal. Still, she did not understand it; she had the sense, however, to go on steadily in the new life she had sought, the Donna getting eight good hours of work out of her "bird" daily, and finding her a much more profitable investment than any two of her black servants. But there were other reasons why Lola was content.

And now into this life came the unexpected attentions of Pierre Brandon. What did they mean? Lola supposed they meant only the same old story. But the Donna was of a different opinion. Dear Lola must not work so hard; she really could not allow it. One of the servants should from that moment take part of the care off her hands. Was there any thing her "bird" wanted? any thing her own Teresa could get for her? She had only to speak. Whereupon the "bird," after some hesitation and signs of a feeling that was almost reluctance, selected a new dress of thin black material, which she fashioned herself after a pattern in her memory. When it was finished, she put it on, threw a black lace mantilla over her hair, placed a red rose in her bodice, and then stood looking at herself in the small mirror on the wall. Apparently the picture was satisfactory, for, thus attired, she went out to walk with Brandon on the pine-barrens. One of her admirers on the river had been an artist, and he had painted her in like costume, she meanwhile sitting to him dressed in her most careful imitations of New York fashions. She had felt mortified at the time, but since then she had comprehended what the artist meant. He had amused himself instructing her. It was remarkable how many persons had instructed Lola Valdez.

The forty looked on, and said that Brandon was "studying the tropics," "trying contrasts," "passing away the time." He was with the young Spanish girl constantly. The Donna now confided to each man in the house (making appointments for the purpose in mysterious whispers) her own wrought-up feelings on the subject. Was she not partly responsible for the happiness of her dear Lola, especially with the warning of her own wrecked affections strewing the rocky shores of doom? What was (excuse her sisterly anxiety) Brandon's real nature? Was he heroic and noble? Had he the soul of a knight? She (the Donna) *could* not countenance him unless he had.

The gentlemen all assured Teresa that Brandon was heroic; the "soul of a knight" did not at all express his inward heroism. One of them added that he was "chivalry concentrated and expressed in a living essence," which sentence the Donna afterward repeated to Lola, with tears of delight.

The forty now began to ask what Miss Fordyce thought of all this. Did she feel it? What did she say? Her face remained impassive. She said nothing. So no one could divine by the law of contraries what she thought. What she felt, the four walls of her room alone knew.

One afternoon she went out for a solitary walk on the barrens. The others had all gone down the beach. She had watched them pass in parties of two and three, carrying umbrellas, shawls, and books, Brandon and the Spanish girl half an hour in advance of the rest. She would have the barrens all to herself that day. In five minutes the house was out of sight; in ten the old light-house had disappeared, and she could not even hear the sound of the sea. The peculiar silence of the barrens filled the air. She was always as conscious of it as though it had been audible. She walked on slowly. No need now to keep watch over her face, no need now to hold up her head, and look proudly and coldly around; there was no one to see her but the small flowers peeping above the grass. Each day was now an ordeal of so many long hours, to be lived through as best she could. She was utterly surprised by Brandon's course—surprised and crushed. Pride came to her aid, and no one detected her real feelings, but she suffered intensely. She asked herself a thousand times what he could

mean. Any answer was better than that of real interest on his part. She was on her way that day to the scene of their last interview, a little nook known only to themselves. Here she had been with Brandon on four of her birthdays, and when their final interview came, they had selected it as the place, not only on account of its solitariness, but also because it was in a certain way a memorial spot. She was now on her way there again for the first time since that day.

The pine-barrens of Florida reveal themselves only to a few. To the minds of most persons who have seen them they are dull, desolate expanses, without beauty or use. But to those who know them they unveil a fascinating charm. The peculiar way in which the trees stand, never near, never very far apart, gives an idea of wide, calm endlessness very different from that produced by the close vistas of pine woods or the expanse of the prairie. In no direction can you see any horizon line, and the absolute similarity of one mile to the next confuses distances and gives an impression of boundlessness. The world seems very far away. Here is no "use" for any thing. It has been like this since creation, and will be the same to the end of the universe. Let us walk here a while, and care and trouble will cease to be. Why should we struggle any more, or weep? Here is peace. Thus speak the barrens; and if you will listen to them, your eyes are touched, and you behold the soft, feathery outlines of the single trees, the beauty of the unexpected little pools of clear ruby-colored water, the peculiar effect of the fans of the dwarf palmetto, the small flowers, and, over and through all, the free, calm loneliness, so restful to the tired heart and mind. Eleanor had left the track, and now followed a white sand trail so narrow that her skirt brushed on both sides the low bushes of wax-myrtle that bordered it. But after a while even this little trail she abandoned, and followed a little ridge westward, where there was no path at all. After walking nearly half an hour she came to a curve in the ridge, and ascended it. Six steps brought her nearly to the summit. On the other side, which descended sharply, was the little nook, a still, ruby pool, and around half of it a semicircle of arrow-shaped lily leaves, rising one above the other in circling ranks, tier above tier, as though they were sitting in a green colosseum, looking down upon a combat on the pool below. Not another blade of any kind of green in this little semicircle save the arrow-shaped leaves, and they grew as evenly as though they had been planted. It was a marvellous little picture. Opposite this pomp of green lances was a bed of gray moss, where Eleanor and Brandon sat when they came there; but she could not see it now. She had paused before quite reaching the summit, when the lily leaves came in sight, and stood with her eyes fixed upon them, thinking sadly of the past. But of one thing she was sure, with all her sadness—*this* little spot was hers. Suddenly some one spoke, and so near her that the voice seemed in her ear. It was Brandon's voice, and this was what it said: "I wanted you to come here; I knew you would appreciate the little nook. I have been saving it to show to you, Lola." And then Miss Fordyce recovered her consciousness, and perceived that she was listening.

The two speakers were directly below her; two steps more would bring her within their sight. Her approach had been noiseless—every thing is noiseless on the pine-barrens—and her retreat, if she made it, might be noiseless as well. But although there are no sounds, sight is enlarged and extended; if either of them should rise before she had passed over a full mile, her figure would be recognized at once. Would it not be worse if he should suspect she had been there and stolen away than if she showed herself now? Besides, the woman's burning heart wanted, as usual, to see all, know all, no matter at the cost of what bitter pain. Putting on, therefore, all her armor of cold indifference again, she went on up to the summit, purposely brushing the bushes so that Brandon might hear her approach. But she need not have given herself the trouble; Brandon did not stir. He looked up, recognized her, and raised his hat, but kept unchanged his position at the feet of the Spanish girl. Lola raised her eyes too, and saw the pale, slender woman of thirty standing there and looking down upon them. And then there was silence for several seconds—a perceptible silence which no one wished or intended, only words did not seem to be quite ready. Lola's straw hat lay on the moss beside her. There was a rich color in her cheeks; she seemed excited. She was below medium height; her form was

full and exquisitely rounded; her heavy dark hair, large soft dark eyes, and pretty, arched, half-parted lips gave her a beauty which was in some respects remarkable. It was the manner of a child and the loveliness of a woman.

Eleanor's and Brandon's eyes held each other steadily. "Will you come down and sit with us a while?" he asked.

"Thanks; not to-day. I only came for a few of those lily leaves."

He rose to gather them for her, and as his hand pushed the greenery aside, they both saw one of her little gray gloves lying there, wet with the dews of many nights; and both remembered when it was dropped. It was on her birthday, the 19th of December; he had unbuttoned it himself and thrown it down. To-day he did not touch it, but left it where it was, ceremoniously gathering the leaves and handing them to her. She took them, arranged them with a few orchids she had in her hand, said a few words calmly about the beauty of the afternoon, and then went away, walking a mile straight onward without turning her head, and then, when fairly out of sight, throwing herself down upon the ground among the rough palmettoes, and resting her face on the white sand. Her feeling was: "If it would only open and take me in, and let me rest there forever!"

It is one thing to feel anger against a person we have loved; it is quite another to feel jealousy. When both are suffering, there is a certain equality about it which makes it bearable; but when one finds that the other has a new interest, and no longer cares, then the anger is turned into the serpents of jealousy, biting day and night. Eleanor had been surprised and hurt by Brandon's course since their engagement had been broken, but she had not been jealous until now. It cut her to the heart that he had taken this Spanish girl to that one little nook, placed her on the moss where she herself had sat, opposite the court of the lilies where her own poor glove was lying now neglected and forgotten.

What was it that had parted these two?

"Your coldness," Brandon would have said. And "Your arbitrary will," Eleanor would have answered. When word came at last that the estate was free, the new liberty made a new atmosphere for them in spite of themselves. The change was too great. Brandon had now in his hands a large fortune, and insensibly his feelings altered, or rather, not his feelings, but his manner. He wished Eleanor to go north with him immediately, so that they might be married in the old church at home before the close of the year. She objected to this haste, and deferred the marriage until spring. He was deeply offended, and accused her of indifference and coldness; she was too proud to defend herself, and grew colder still, until at last his accusation seemed founded upon reality. Thus they tormented each other as only those can who have loved each other well, owing to the peculiar intimate knowledge which only love gives. Their words became stings. She roused in him an obstinate anger; he wounded her tenderest feelings. Both were wrong; but when the final parting came, the woman suffered the most.

Practical minds, if they had been told the story, would have said that the whole trouble came from that evil thing, a long engagement; they knew each other so well that they *could* not yield. This was true. But it was equally true, also, that Brandon was arbitrary and Eleanor proud. In a less artificial state of society (if they could have borne to live in one) these natural qualities of theirs might have found expression, and been less dangerous. But they were both quiet, self-controlled, and *blasé*, and had been for years quiet, self-controlled, and *blasé*. The result was that when the spark kindled at last, there was a mighty flame. Human nature is human nature still, in spite of the charmingly weary manners of cultivated society.

In her heart Eleanor had not believed that Brandon would long remain away from her; she made the woman's mistake of judging him by herself. She could not make the first advance, but when he did (surely, surely he would), she would go to meet him with her whole heart. But now, suddenly, while she was longing and waiting, he had shown this strange new fancy.

What was it? In all their long and intimate acquaintance she had never noticed in him any signs of admiration, save perhaps a passing glance or two, for beauty unaccompanied by education and refinement. He had finished all that before she knew him.. What, then, was this?

But Eleanor made the mistake that jealous women often make—she did not give their full value to the attractions of her rival. Lola Valdez was not uneducated. With a naturally good mind, she had been

read to by admirers with a taste for literature, had been taught music by those who were musical, had heard something of art from the artist, had studied German with one, French with another, conversation with all. She was a good girl in her way, and had been guarded vigilantly by her old Spanish aunt. Her history had been not unlike that of an opera-singer, who is made love to and who makes love in return every evening of her life, and yet keeps it all apart from her real self. Brandon had begun to talk to her at first to pass away the time; perhaps he thought, too (no man is above this), that Eleanor would notice it. But now he was, in a certain way, fascinated by this girl, and was more influenced by her beauty, too, than he himself realized. He knew nothing of her history; to him she seemed very young and inexperienced. He took for simple nature what was in reality owing to long habit. The girl was not artful so much as learned; there was not a glance of her eye, or an expression on her pretty lips, or a tone of her voice, or gesture of her hand, which had not been made evident to her by the admiration and comment of some lover.

Brandon had been offended with Eleanor on account of her coldness; he now said to himself that she was artificial and conventional as well. *She* would never step beyond the bounds for him; she would not sacrifice one of her rules, traditions, or beliefs. She was a statue, a well-bred Christian statue, who went to church on all the saints' days, fasted, and was so rigidly accurate as regarded her own conscience that she had no time to think of any other; all the rest of the world might go to destruction so long as *she* was saved. Her will was steel; her feelings doled out by rule. He had made a great mistake. And then, by way of diversion, he allowed himself greater liberty with Lola, and began to cherish the thought (more flattering than any other to a man of his age) that the young girl already showed signs of something very like love for him.

After the encounter at the nook of lilies, Eleanor walked no more on the barrens, much as she loved them. Their near, clear distances were too dangerous: she might see them; they might see her. Lola cared nothing for the barrens, and she did not like to walk. But Brandon never gave up for any one his own love of earth and sky and sea—a love which Eleanor had shared, and which had been a strong, unconscious bond between them, from whose severance they were both now suffering. So he carried Lola to the barrens, and her small feet ached with the long, unaccustomed walks. She had noticed all his tastes; and although not comprehending them, had adjusted herself easily to them, as usual. She never made any effort to talk about them: she knew that there she might make mistakes: she simply let herself accord with them. If he paused beside a mossy bank, she sank down upon it as though longing for the rest; if he threw back his head as the west wind came across the barrens, she let her gypsy hat fall back, and drew a long involuntary breath as though enjoying its fragrant softness; when he gathered the little wild flowers for her, she said nothing, but the tender care with which she carried them seemed to betray a deep inward love of flowers. In reality, to her eyes they were weeds; but—they happened to be his fancy.

More time passed. Eleanor had now accepted as a fact Brandon's interest in this girl, and ascribed it to the power of mere youth and beauty. She had no realization of the impression her own faults of character had made upon Brandon; that the very contrast to herself had formed half the charm which now drew him on. On this point she was blind.

She was not much alone, but purposely spent most of her time with the others. She was a little more quiet than formerly, perhaps, but that was all.

One morning she went with a party down the beach to spend the day; mid-afternoon was over, the chowder was eaten, and all the people save herself had subsided into quiet enjoyment of the sea and the soft sea-breeze; at such times as these the loneliness that took possession of her was overpowering. She rose and strolled away from the others down the beach, simply because she could no longer answer when they spoke. There were twenty in the party; the other twenty, including Brandon, had remained at home. Soon she passed the point of the scallop and entered the next one. Now she was alone. Little shore water-birds ran along before her on the wet sand at the edge of the waves with their swift peculiar motion, purple jelly-fish lay here and there, and blue Portuguese men-of-war, stranded at the last high tide. Out on the still sea lay a low bank of fog; at night it would

steal in and rest upon the shore; and when she looked from her window the next morning there would still be a wreath of it around the old light-house, and waving columns on the beach ready to depart. This soft white fog floating in and out is one of the loveliest charms of the Florida beaches. She had passed the second scallop, and now she came to the third. Was there a fatality about it? Here, sitting on the sand together, she came upon Brandon and Lola.

But there was no fatality: we talk too much about fatality: it was merely chance. Here were two persons almost constantly together within circumscribed limits, and a third person, also confined to those limits, had come upon them only once before, namely, at the nook of lilies. It might be said that chance had been unusually good-natured. A Florida pony and phaeton on the cliff above showed how they had come. Lola, in her black dress, was sitting on a striped mantle of Damascus colors which the artist had given her. It was not new, having been some time in his studio, and the girl in her heart hated it; but she had learned what he meant, and now used it occasionally when the background was appropriate. Brandon, stretched on the sand, was reading aloud, and Eleanor's eyes at once recognized the book. It was a little manuscript volume, bound in Russia leather, in which he wrote down stray verses or sentences that he fancied, and among the extracts were many of her own selection. Had they not lived one life for years? She heard the words he was reading:

"'Behind, the broad pine-barrens lie,
Without a path or trail;
Before, the ocean meets the sky
Without a rock or sail.
We call across to Africa—
The waves from mile to mile
Bear on the hail from Florida,
And the answering sigh of the Nile.'"

It was a verse she had selected.

Through these seconds of time she had been advancing, and they were now going through the form of greetings and conventional remarks. She even sat down for a few moments, not caring, she said, to go farther; and then, when she was rested, she left them to themselves again, and went back to her own party.

Rested!

Two more weeks passed; the spring was over; they were approaching the nine-months-long summer of the South. For there is a spring in Florida, although the Northerner scarcely detects it. The perennial green is not changed, but individual leaves come and go; the violets open their blue eyes on the barrens, the jasmine bursts into wreaths of bloom. The date of general departure was now fixed; in a few weeks more Black Point would be left to itself. Eleanor, in spite of all her effort, had begun to change outwardly. It was not that she was paler; on the contrary, there was a slight color in her cheeks now all the time; but her hands were hot; at night she scarcely slept. One day the house seemed especially insupportable. She went out, although the heat was burning, and took the path through the chaparral toward the old light-house. The ancient beacon had not been lighted for more than a century. It had never had a lantern, only an iron cage on its top through whose grating the keeper thrust light-wood and set it on fire when the night was dark and a Spanish ship expected. It was a square stone tower, divided into two stories, with an old winding staircase leading from one to the other. But the wood-work was broken and decayed; from the top you could look down and see the whole of the floor below. In the close chaparral the heat was intense, the hot fragrance from the aromatic bay leaves overpowering. Eleanor thought that if she went up to the top of the light-house, the height would lift her above the densely sweet odors, and the stone walls would keep out the heat; besides, from there she could see the ocean. She went up the old stairway with a weary step, sat down on the floor near the little square window, and leaning her head against the cool stone of the wall, gazed out over the sea. The little window was narrow; she had only a narrow breadth of water before her, although in length it stretched four thousand miles. But the view contented her; there fell upon her heart a kind of lethargy which was something like peace.

While she sat thus, the atmosphere outside was breathless; not a leaf stirred in the chaparral, not a needle of the pines moved on the more distant barrens. The birds were all silent; the large spiders were uneasily finding hiding-places for themselves between the clapboards of the old house. No one was abroad save herself. No one? Surely that was a step,

a voice. Persons had entered hurriedly down below, and as they entered a clap of thunder seemed to break in the air directly above her head. From her narrow window looking toward the east she had not seen the approaching storm. When she recovered from the shock, holding her throbbing temples with the palms of her hands, she bent forward to look through an aperture left by a fallen plank. But she knew by intuition who they were already: yes, Brandon and the Spanish girl. Brandon was using all his strength in an effort to close the old door, as the wind was now upon them, almost a hurricane. He succeeded partially, and drew Lola into the sheltered side; she seemed frightened, and clung to his arm. He spoke to her, but Eleanor could not hear what they said; they were far below her, and the rushing sound of the wind filled the air. It seemed wonderful that the old tower stood, and she almost wished that it might fall; for Lola, really frightened, hid her face on Brandon's shoulder, and then he put his arms around her and drew her close. The woman above leaned her head back against the wall and looked no more.

How long they all staid there she never knew. When the wind had passed on, and the rain began, she could hear every now and then the murmur of their voices, but not their words. When the rain at last grew lighter, she heard the door forced open again with a grinding sound on the stone floor, and then, a moment later, she knew, by some sixth sense, that they were gone. After another indefinite period consciousness came to her that she too must go; for even when the heart is breaking it continues still necessary that one should appear at tea. It was raining, but she did not care. She took off her hat and let the drops fall on her uncovered head; her gray dress was soon wet. While still in the close little chaparral path she came suddenly upon Pierre Brandon; he was returning to the light-house for Lola's lace scarf.

"Where have you been?" he asked, abruptly, holding his umbrella over her as he spoke. The path led only to the light-house, and the chaparral on each side was so dense that no one could penetrate it; she *must* have been there.

She made no reply.

He looked at her searchingly. "Were you there at the same time we were?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Did you hear what we said?"

"No."

"You could not, of course; the wind and the rain were too loud. You were up above, I suppose?"

"I was."

"I will go back with you to the house," said Brandon. "Will you take my arm? I can shield you better so."

She obeyed mechanically, and they walked down the path together.

"I am glad I met you," said Brandon, breaking the silence after a moment. "I prefer that you should know it before any one else. Miss Valdez is to be my wife; it was decided this afternoon." He paused an instant or two, and then went on. "For any pain I may have caused you—although I do not think you have felt any—I now ask your pardon. We were not suited to each other. I do not profess to be good enough for you, and you are far too good for me. Will you take my hand before we part, to show me that you bear me no ill-will, Eleanor?"

And then Eleanor broke down. She stopped, hid her face in her hands, and wept as if her heart would break. Brandon was utterly surprised. He had expected scorn, perhaps anger; but this was simple grief. He looked at her in silence. But a moment can not undo the impression of months: she was tired; she was ill; she had been out in the storm, and her nerves were excited. It could not be for him that she was weeping so. His silence acted upon her like a cold repression; she dried her eyes, lifted her wet skirt again, and walked on. They turned a curve, and were now within sight of the house.

"You are very tired," said Brandon, excusingly. "The hurricane was really alarming. I do not wonder that you were frightened."

But she did not accept the excuse.

Just before they reached the house she held out her hand, and her eyes looked straight into his. "Good-by," she said. He took her hand, and for a moment they stood thus in silence.

"Eleanor," he said, slowly, "what does this mean?"

"It is too late," she answered.

And he did not contradict her.

The next moment she was gone.

The new engagement was not made known. Lola had earnestly asked to have

it kept secret for the present; even the Donna was not told. No one knew it save Eleanor, and Lola did not know that she knew it; Brandon had not thought it necessary to tell her. Fascinated as he was with the beautiful Spanish girl, she was to him but a child. He pleased himself with thoughts of adorning her, of instructing her, of initiating her gradually into knowledge of life, until by-and-by she would develop into womanhood, as the bud opens into the flower. She was not a companion for him, even now. But she was young and fair, and she loved him intensely; this last was the charm.

And now began a singular life of nine days. It is probable that Black Point had never seen so much human passion before—passion of rage and jealousy, passion of suspicion and anger, passion of love, self-sacrifice, and pain.

On the first night Eleanor saw this: a man waiting under the trees, Lola stealing forth to join him, the two figures going away together, and not returning for an hour. The man was shorter than Brandon; his figure and gait were unlike those of any one in the house; it was therefore a stranger. Eleanor's window was the only one that overlooked that corner of the garden. Restless and unable to sleep, she had risen, and was sitting there in the darkness when this occurred. The faint light of a crescent moon showed her the scene and the two figures.

The next morning Lola's eyes were slightly reddened; she seemed nervous. Eleanor noticed this. But Brandon noticed nothing, or, if he did, he attributed it to himself. For she was doubly loving that day, and it was very sweet to the man of thirty-eight. The next night there was another meeting, followed by another feverish day. The third night Lola staid out two hours, and came back alone, with her head bowed down as though she was crying. The next day she did not appear; she was suffering from a violent headache, the Donna said, and she related to every body how the veins stood out on her temples, and how strangely white she was. Brandon came very near proclaiming his engagement that day, so that he might have the right to go in and comfort his poor little love, but he refrained. That night there was a thunder-storm; no one could stir outside. Yet Eleanor watched till dawn. The next day she looked worn and pallid. But Lola came down to breakfast, attired in the Spanish dress, and looking absolutely brilliant: her eyes shone like stars; her cheeks were flushed; she laughed and talked more than usual. She seemed to avoid Brandon a little, and that made him more determined than ever to have her with him. But she would not drive on the barrens; no, she would not walk on the beach. It was not until he suggested the boat that she yielded. They went out sailing, and floated up and down on the summer sea in front of the house almost all day. The fifth night the sky was clear and the moonlight brilliant; but no one entered the garden. Eleanor now looked as though she was on the eve of a long illness; every one noticed the change. Her brain was in a tumult. What should she do? What ought she to do? Something, or nothing? Should she act, or remain passive? And if she acted, would it be really for Brandon's sake, or *for her own*? She waited through the day, undecided. Lola continued gay, and the elder woman fancied it was the gayety of desperation. Yet why should the girl be desperate? Whatever she did in secret, had she not Brandon firmly secured? If this stranger was some former lover, she would never sacrifice for him the bright luxurious life opening before her; she would play with him, pacify him, and then dismiss him to marry the other. This was Eleanor's opinion.

And now for Lola's. During the preceding winter on the river a new kind of a man had appeared in her horizon, like a new star in the sky, namely, a man who did not compliment her or praise her beauty; a man who did not wish to teach her any thing, to form her mind, or mould her character; a man who simply and plainly loved her. When he found that he loved her, he came and told her so, and asked her to be his wife. She was so surprised that she looked at him dumbly; it was unlike any thing that had ever happened to her before in her whole life. She had been steeped in the atmosphere of protestations from childhood. Here was a man who made none, but simply said he loved her, and asked her to marry him! Ethan Carew was a Northerner, but poor. He had bought land on the river, laid out a small farm, and planted an orange grove; but it would be years before he was any thing save

poor, and his wife would have to be a helpmate in the true sense of the word to her farmer husband. Strangely enough, and to herself most strange of all, Lola liked him—before she knew it, loved him. She felt the first real attachment of her life stealing into her heart, her life, where a certain other kind of love had been like apples of Sodom under her feet. Then the Spanish aunt had discovered the affair, and forbade it harshly. This did not make any difference in their love, but it did make a difference in Lola's life. The Spanish aunt had a terrible temper, and the girl's life became insupportable. She fled, and took refuge at Black Point. Ethan was to build a small house on his farm, and then, in the spring, he was to come for her, and the Spanish aunt would find herself very well defied, with the sanction of Holy Church against her.

To this girl, loving Ethan Carew, yet adoring luxury and splendor, came the temptation of Brandon and Brandon's wealth. At first she did not believe that he was in earnest; she had had long and bitter experience on that point. She let it go on, occasionally indulging herself with the dream of what it would be to be his wife; that was no harm, since he would never ask her. At last she could not resist trying to draw an avowal of some kind from the quiet lips of this impassive person, who was with her constantly, yet never much moved. These attempts Brandon took for love. Then when the moment came, and he did ask her, what did Lola do? She turned white, hesitated, and finally, trembling from head to foot as she thought of the other, she murmured a "Yes."

She wrote to Ethan immediately, and asked to be released from her engagement. In answer he came over to Black Point in person. He was the man whom Eleanor had seen.

In compliance with Lola's earnest entreaties, he staid at a little house several miles distant, the hut of a Florida cracker, and walked over to see her in the night. "I do this for you," he said, "although I hate all underhand contrivances. I do not know what to make of you, Lola; but understand one thing—I shall not give you up until you plainly tell me you do not love me."

For Lola had thrown herself into his arms with tears, declaring she would die for him, she loved him so deeply.

She meant to marry Brandon, yet she loved Carew.

But Carew was not a man to long endure trifling, no matter how sweet and caressing it might be. On the third night he told her that she was deceiving him in some way, and that it must end. Would she marry him during the coming week? If she would not promise, he would leave her. And then, in spite of her tears, as she did not promise, he did put her away, and walked out of the garden without once turning back. All the next day she had suffered from the burning pain which the Donna had translated into headache. Thrown with Brandon again, she had lived through the days in a state of feverish excitement, hardly conscious of what she was saying or doing. She was not sure whether Carew had gone back to the river or not, and so would not drive on the barrens or walk on the beach lest he should see her, even from a distance. But it was not that she feared any outbreak. Carew had told her plainly that he would not have her for his wife unless she loved him enough to forsake all else for him. "I am not jealous, Lola," he said; "I know you love me, and I know you do not love this gentleman, whoever he may be, whose name, and perhaps fortune, attract you. If you marry him, loving me, I shall feel free at once, for I shall despise you." He was a cool, determined fellow, if he was poor.

The next day passed, and the next night; he did not return. Lola was now tortured by the fear that he had gone. She said to herself that if she was sure he had left her—left her finally and forever—it would be easier to bear it, and that therefore it was best that she should go herself and see. All of which was simply one of love's devices to be in his presence once more. On the seventh night, therefore, this girl who never walked unless compelled by necessity, this girl who was so timorous that a bird stirring in the branches frightened her, slipped out of the house when every thing was still, and, all alone, went through the chaparral and across the barrens to the hut where Carew had been hidden; and Eleanor saw her go.

Carew was still there; with all his sternness he had not then left her forever. She threw herself upon his breast, sobbing passionately. She loved him; and she could not separate herself from him. Brandon would go away in a few days;

something might happen (although she knew not what) of which she could make use as an excuse to defer their marriage. She still meant to marry Brandon, but she would not give up Carew. If the worst came to the worst, she would not give up Carew. And this was Lola's opinion.

That night when she returned, Carew came with her, and Eleanor saw him.

Another day and night passed, and the ninth night came. Eleanor had gone through every stage of torment; she believed that Lola was holding clandestine meetings with a former lover, but that she would finally give him up for Brandon. She believed that Brandon was infatuated with the girl, and would not credit the evidence against her even of his own eyes; and she said to herself, with feverish bitterness, that it was a hard, hard fate that made *her* the only witness to all that was happening. Again and again the doubt came to her: Brandon is a man of the world, astute and experienced. Would he not, after all, comprehend every thing if he should only *see*? This doubt was the temptation that haunted her.

The ninth night came. Lola, grown bolder by impunity, came out of the house before midnight, passing under Eleanor's window, as usual, on her way to the arbor where she was to meet Carew. She had come to regard that window as quite safe. Had she not passed it again and again without detection? To Lola's mind Eleanor was quite old; probably she was in bed and asleep at an early hour in order to preserve her eyes and complexion. But on this night the young girl had barely reached the first tree when from the front of the house came another figure—Brandon himself. The moonlight was brilliant; he advanced slowly, as if looking for somebody. Eleanor, who had been at her window all the time behind the curtain, saw him, half started forward, then stopped. He came nearer. Hers was the only window on that side; it was open, and he knew that it was hers. He paused and looked up, but she did not move. Then he spoke. "Eleanor," he said, softly—"Eleanor."

She parted the curtains and looked out.

"Come out on the balcony a moment, please."

She obeyed; she was trembling, but he could not see that. It was a low balcony; she was quite near him. His face was turned toward her, his back was toward the tree behind which Lola was hiding. Broad unbroken moonlight lay all around that tree; the girl could not escape; and three steps more in that direction would bring him within plain sight of her crouching form. And it seemed as if even this was not enough; for, as Eleanor stood there, she saw the same stranger come out from the rose thicket, cross over the grass, and join Lola. Ethan Carew had seen it all; and, in any danger, he intended to be with the woman he loved. He almost hoped, indeed, that there would be a discovery, to end the whole matter and give him his own.

And now Brandon had but to take the three steps, and he would see not only Lola, but Carew, the two standing together in the narrow shadow of the tree.

The moonlight shone full in Eleanor's pale face. "Have you seen Lola?" asked Brandon. "I am almost sure she is out here somewhere. Did she pass this way?"

A long period seemed to go by, during which all the most eloquent and subtle devils that ever attack the human mind swarmed around the poor woman who loved him so deeply. It was not even necessary that she should speak at all, they said; hesitation would do it; even silence. Only three steps!

But with a desperate effort over herself, with no hope of any thing save that she would not do this thing, she answered, clearly: "Yes; Miss Valdez came out to get water from the well, but she went back immediately—five minutes ago, perhaps—and is now in her own room. I heard her door close." She paused an instant; then added: "Will you be so good as to bring me my shawl from the front piazza? I forgot it when I came in." Brandon went, without a word; and, as she expected, the instant he disappeared, the two who were hiding left their perilous post, and ran across like shadows to the thicket. When he came back they were safely out of sight, and all was quiet.

He held up the shawl. Her face was wan and white, her hands quite cold, as she took it from him. But she smiled bravely. It was her last effort—a supreme smile of self-conquest and renunciation.

And then Brandon swung himself up to the balcony, and took her in his arms. "Noble, generous woman!" he said. "I saw them both. I know all. Kiss me

once, to show me that you love me, and then I will kneel at your feet and admire you, my only love, now as ever, my wife, my Eleanor."

For once a lie was noble.

Brandon had discovered the true state of affairs several days before. With the first knowledge the whole veil of enchantment had fallen away from the Spanish girl; he understood what she was, and she sank at once into her true position. He was not even angry with her, only with himself. Mrs. Ethan Carew's handsomest wedding present bore his card.

"It is a very satisfactory thing, isn't it?" commented the winter colony, in travelling attire, bag in hand, "that this old engagement of ours is renewed. We were accustomed to it, and so were the pine-barrens and the scallops; in fact, it *belonged* to the Point."

RECOLLECTIONS OF AGASSIZ.

IN the commerce of nations it is important that there should be an interchange of minds as well as of merchandise. In the annual reports of our Secretaries of the Treasury the imports and exports are correctly given in the current coin or currency of the land, and the balance of trade, either for or against us, is correctly estimated; but in stating the value of our imports there is an unavoidable omission of our annual importations of skilled laborers, of inventors, of engineers, and of men of genius generally in the various departments of art, literature, and science. The worth of such men can not be gleaned from the records of the Custom-house; yet it is plain that they must add enormously to the wealth of the country by simply diffusing their exceptional knowledge or exercising their exceptional talents. Indeed, there can be no imported wealth which exceeds in value the importation of the creators of wealth. The body which contains an ingenious and inventive mind may not be equal in bulk to a single case of goods which comes over in the same ship with him; but if the mind lodged in the body be that of a Watt, an Arkwright, or a Bessemer, it is impossible to compute the number of the fleets that may be needed to export the products of his brain. Even in the matter of pure science, it is difficult to compute the value in dollars and cents of an imported man of science of the first class. He may seem to scorn all applications of his discoveries to useful ends; but it is certain that a crowd of bright practical minds will follow in the path of his discoveries, and convert all his additions to the knowledge of nature into additional means for the conquest of nature.

At any rate, there can be no doubt that the vessel which brought Louis Agassiz to our shores brought a scientific intelligence and scientific force which outvalued not only all the rest of the cargo, but of a thousand ordinary cargoes. In getting thorough possession of him, in making him an American citizen, and in resolutely refusing, with his hearty concurrence, to deliver him up to the country which afterward claimed his services, the United States must be considered to have made a good bargain. He was too poor when he arrived here to pay any "duties" into the Treasury; but the impulse he gave to science in this country enriched us in a degree that can not be measured by any money standard. Indeed, the American opponents of his scientific theories were and are among the foremost to acknowledge the marvellous effects of his scientific inspiration; for he popularized pure science, and lifted high in public esteem the whole body of investigators who were loyally engaged in its service. From him came the most notable of all the maxims which illustrate the disinterestedness of the true devotee of science. At the time he was absorbed in some minute investigations in a difficult department of zoology, he received a letter from the president of a lyceum at the West, offering him a large sum for a course of popular lectures on natural history. His answer was: "I CAN NOT AFFORD TO WASTE MY TIME IN MAKING MONEY." The words deserve to be printed in capitals; but Agassiz was innocently surprised that a sentiment very natural to him should have excited so much comment. He knew that scores of his brother scientists, American and European, would have used the words "afford" and "waste" in the same sense had they been similarly interrupted in an investigation which promised to yield them a new fact or principle. Still, the announcement from such an authority that there was a body of men in the United States who could not *afford* to *waste* time in making money had an immense effect. It convinced thousands of intelligent and