

## THE HOUSE OF MARTHA.

## XXVI.

## MOTHER ANASTASIA.

IN the half hour during which I remained alone upon the bluff, awaiting the return of Walkirk and the fishing party, I thought as much of the lady with whom I had been talking as the lady of whom I had been talking.

"How is it possible," I asked myself, "that this gentlewoman, warm with her rich blooded beauty, alive with ripe youth, born to delight the soul of man and fire his heart, should content herself to be a head nurse in a hospital; to wander in an unsightly disguise among dismal sick-beds; to direct the management of measles-refuges; to shut herself up in a bare-floored, cold-walled institution with narrow-minded Sister Sarahs; to be, in a word, the Mother Superior of the House of Martha?"

That she should occupy this position seemed to me a crime. There were many women in the world who could do all she was doing, but there were few who could take her place in the world of full, true life.

When the fishing party returned, I went to the house to take leave of our new friends.

"You must go?" said the Sand Lady. "And where, may I ask, is it imperative that you should go?"

"To the island where you have so kindly allowed us to sojourn," I replied.

"You sleep in the cabin of your boat, I believe?" she said; and I answered that we did.

"Very well, then," continued she, "why not bring your floating home to this island? It is in every way better than that. I will give you exclusive rights over a little bay and an adjoining dell. There you can cook your own meals

when you like, or you can come to us when you like; we always have more than enough for all who inhabit this island. In the evening you can sit alone on the beach and think of the far-away loved one, or you can come up to the house and play whist or twenty questions. The Understudy can go fishing with my brother; they suit each other admirably. What do you say?"

"I say, madam," I replied, with a bow, "the sands of which you are the lady are the dust of diamonds, and your invitation is a golden joy."

"Bless me," she exclaimed, "what must you be out of check!"

That evening we sailed to Racket Island, brought away our belongings, and established ourselves in the land-locked little bay, about a quarter of a mile from the house of the Sand Lady.

Early the next morning I walked around to a pier where I had noticed a good-sized yacht was moored. It was still there; apparently no one had left the island. After our breakfast on the beach I told Walkirk to devote himself to independent occupations, and walked up to the house. I found the lady who had called herself a Person and the one of whom I did not like to think as an Interpolation sitting together upon the piazza. I joined them.

"Would n't you be very much obliged to me," asked the Person, after a scattering conversation, in which I suppose I appeared as but a perfunctory performer, "if I were to go away and leave you alone with this lady?"

"As this is an island of plain speaking," I replied, "I will say, yes."

Both ladies laughed, and the Person retired to her hammock.

"Now, then," asked Mother Anastasia, "what is the meaning of this alarming frankness?"

"I wish to talk to you of Sylvia," I answered.

"If you imagine," she said, "that I intend to spend the short time I shall remain upon this island in talking of Sylvia, you are very much mistaken."

"Then let us talk of yourself," I replied.

She turned upon me with a frown and a laugh.

"If I had known," she said, "your habits of ingenuousness and candor, I should have made you dictate to Sylvia through a speaking-tube. You have known me less than a day. You have known her for a month. Can it be possible that you talk to her as freely as you talk to me?"

"Madam," I exclaimed, "I love Sylvia, and therefore could not speak freely to her."

"Your distinctions are wonderfully clear-cut," she said; "but why do you wish to talk of me? I suppose you want to know why I am Mother Superior of the House of Martha?"

"Yes," I answered, "that is a thing I cannot understand; but of course I should not feel justified in even alluding to it if, yesterday, you had not so kindly given me your confidence in regard to yourself and Sylvia."

"It seems to me," she remarked, "that, as you decline to recognize the name given to that young woman by our institution, you should call her Miss Raynor; but I will say no more of that."

"It would be well," said I. "She is Sylvia to me. You must remember that I never met her in the circles of conventionalism."

She laughed. "This whole affair is certainly very independent of conventionalism; and as to your curiosity about me, that is very easily gratified. Nearly five years ago I connected myself with the House of Martha. Although there were sisters older than myself, I was chosen Mother Superior, because I possessed rather more administrative abili-

ties than any of the others. I think I have governed the House fairly well, even if, in regard to the matter of furnishing secretaries to literary men, there has been some dissatisfaction."

"You allude to Sister Sarah?" said I.

"Yes," she answered; "and had she been head of the House, your peace of mind would not have been disturbed. But what I did in that case I did conscientiously and with good intent."

"And you are not sorry for it?" I asked.

"It may be that I shall be sorry for you," she replied, "but that is all I have to say on that point. In a very short time I shall return to my duties and to my sombre bonnet and gown, and these interpolated days, which in a manner have been forced upon me, should be forgotten."

"But one thing you must not forget," I exclaimed: "it was in this time that you promised me"—

"You selfish, selfish man," she interrupted, "you think only of yourself. I shall talk no more of yourself, of myself, or of Sylvia. My friends are at the other side of the house, and I am going to them." And she went.

While Walkirk and I were sailing that afternoon, he managing the boat and I stretched upon some cushions, I told him of my conversations with Mother Anastasia. I considered him worthy of my confidence, and it was pleasant to give it to him.

"She is a rare, strange woman," said he. "I thought her very handsome when I visited her at the House of Martha; but since I have seen her here, dressed in becoming clothes, I consider that she possesses phenomenal attractions."

"And I hope," I remarked, "that she may be phenomenally good-natured, and give me some chances of seeing Sylvia Raynor."

"That would indeed be phenomenal," said Walkirk, laughing, "considering that she is a Mother Superior, and the

young lady is a member of the sisterhood. But everything relating to the case is peculiar, and in my opinion Mother Anastasia is more peculiar than anything else."

That evening we were invited to dine at the house of the Sand Lady. It was a delightful occasion. Everybody was in good spirits, and the general tone of the conversation was singularly lively and unrestrained. Mother Anastasia would not play cards, but we amused ourselves with various sprightly social games, in which the lady who preferred to be called a Person showed a vivacious though sometimes nipping wit. I had no opportunity for further private talk with Mother Anastasia, nor did I desire one. I wished to interest her in my love for Sylvia, but not to bore her with it.

The next day, at about eleven o'clock, the Sand Lady and the Shell Man walked over to our little bay, where they found Walkirk and me fencing upon the level beach.

"Stop your duel, gentlemen," said the lady. "I come to give you the farewells of the Interpolation. She was sorry she could not do this herself, but she went away very early this morning."

"Went away!" I cried, dropping my foil upon the sand. "Where did she go?"

"She sailed in our yacht for Sanford," answered the Sand Lady, "to take the morning train for her beloved House of Martha. My brother accompanied her to the town, but he will be back to-day."

I was surprised and grieved, and showed it.

"We are all sorry to have her go," said the Sand Lady, "and sorry to see her wearing that doleful gray garb, which my brother allowed her to assume this morning."

"I am glad," I exclaimed, "that I did not see her in it!"

The lady looked at me with her pleasant, quiet smile.

"You seem very much interested in her."

"I am," I replied, "very much interested, both directly and indirectly, and I am exceedingly sorry that she departed without my knowing it."

This time the Sand Lady laughed. "Good-morning, gentlemen," said she. "Go on with your duel."

## XXVII.

### A PERSON.

I fenced no more. "Walkirk," I cried, "let us get our traps on board, and be off!"

My Understudy looked troubled,—more troubled than I had ever seen him before.

"Why do you think of this?" he asked. "Where do you propose to go?"

"Home," said I, "to my own house. That is the place where I want to be."

Walkirk stood still and looked at me, his face still wearing an air of deep concern.

"It is not my place to advise," he said, "but it seems to me that your return at this moment would have a very odd appearance, to say the least. Every one would think that you were pursuing Mother Anastasia, and she herself would think so."

"No," said I, "she will not suppose anything of the kind. She will know very well on whose account I came. And as for the people here, they might labor under a mistake at first, because of course I should not offer them any explanation, but they would soon learn the real state of the case; that is, if they correspond with the Mother Superior."

"You propose, then," said Walkirk, "to lay siege to the House of Martha, and to carry away, if you can, Miss Sylvia Raynor?"

"I have made no plans," I answered, "but I can look after my interests better in Arden than I can here. I do not like this sudden departure of the Mother Superior. I very much fear that something has induced her to withdraw the good will with which she previously seemed to look upon my attachment to Miss Raynor. Were this not so, she would have advised with me before she left. Nothing could have been more natural. Now I believe she has set herself against me, and has gone away with the intention permanently of separating Sylvia and myself."

"Have you any reason," asked Walkirk, "to impute such an intention to her?"

"Her sudden flight indicates it," I replied; "and besides, you know, although she is not a Roman Catholic, she is at the head of a religious house, and persons in that position are naturally averse to anybody marrying the sisters under their charge. Even if she does not approve of Miss Raynor's remaining in the House, she may not want her to date a love affair from the establishment. If I remain here, Miss Raynor may be spirited entirely out of my sphere of action."

"It strikes me," said Walkirk, "the way to get her spirited out of your sight and knowledge is for you to go home at this juncture. In that case, Mother Anastasia would be bound, in duty to the young lady and her family, to send her away. Do you not agree with me that if you were to reach Arden in the natural course of events, so to speak, and especially if you got there after your grandmother had returned, you would avoid a great deal of undesirable complication, and perhaps actual opposition?"

"You are right," I answered; "it would not look well for me to start away so suddenly. We will wait a day or two, and then drop off naturally."

Walking toward the house, in the afternoon, I met the Person. She ad-

vanced toward me, holding out her hand with an air of peremptory friendliness.

"I am heartily glad to see you. I want you to amuse me. I could not ask this of you so long as that fascinating abbess was on the island."

I was a little surprised at this salutation, and not at all pleased. I did not fancy this lady. She had an air as if she were availing herself of her right to be familiar with her inferiors.

"I fear it is not in my power to do anything to amuse you," said I.

"Entirely too modest," she answered. "Let us walk over to this bench in the shade. You are not desired at the house; everybody is taking a nap."

I went with her to the bench she had pointed out, and we sat down.

"Now, then," said she, turning toward me, "will you do me the favor to flirt with me? Say for twenty-five minutes," looking at her watch; "that will bring us to four o'clock, when I must go indoors."

At first I thought the woman was insane, but a glance at her face showed that there was no reason for fear of that kind.

"That sounds crazy, does n't it?" she asked, "but it is n't. It is an honest expression of a very natural wish. Hundreds of ladies have doubtless looked at you and had that wish; but social conventions forbade their expressing it. Here we have no conventions, and I speak my mind."

"Madam," said I, "or miss, there are few things I hold in such abhorrence as flirtation." As I said this I looked at her severely, and she looked at me quizzically. She had gray eyes, which were capable of a great variety of expressions, and her face, suffused by the light of a bantering jocularly, was an attractive one. I was obliged to admit this, in spite of my distaste for her.

"I like that," she said; "it sounds so well, after your vigorous flirtation with our abbess. If I had not seen a good

deal of that, I should not have dared to ask you to flirt with me. I thought you liked it, and now that she is gone might be willing to take up with some one else."

I was irritated and disquieted. I had been very earnest in my attentions to Mother Anastasia. Perhaps this lady had seen me attempt to kiss her hand. I must set myself right.

"You are utterly mistaken," said I. "What I had to say to Mother Anastasia related entirely to another person."

"One of the sisters in her institution?" she asked. "She had nothing to do with any other persons, so far as I know. Truly, that is a capital idea!" she exclaimed, without waiting for response from me. "In order to flirt with a member of the sisterhood, a gentleman must direct his attentions to the Mother Superior who represents them, and the flirting is thus done by proxy. Now don't attempt to correct me. The idea is entirely too delightful for me to allow it to be destroyed by any bare statements or assertions."

"I suppose," I answered, "that Mother Anastasia has taken you into her confidence?"

"Thank you very much for that most gratifying testimony to my powers of insight!" she cried. "The Mother Superior gave me no confidences. So you have been smitten by a gray-gown. How did you happen to become acquainted with her? I do not imagine they allow gentleman visitors at the House of Martha?"

"Madam, you know, or assume to know, so much of my affairs," said I, "that in order to prevent injurious conjectures regarding the House of Martha, its officers and inmates, I shall say that I became acquainted in a perfectly legitimate manner with a young lady living therein, who has not yet taken the vows of the permanent sisterhood, and I intend, as soon as circumstances will permit, to make her an offer of marriage.

I assure you, I regret extremely that I have been obliged to talk in this way to a stranger, and nothing could have induced me to do it but the fear that your conjectures and surmises might make trouble. I ask as a right that you will say no more of the matter to any one."

"Would you mind telling me the lady's name?" she asked.

"Of course I shall do no such thing," I answered, rising from my seat, with my face flushing with indignation.

"This is odd flirting, is n't it?" said she, still retaining her seat, — "a quarrel at the very outset. I shall not be prevented from informing you why you ought to tell me the name of the lady. You see that if you don't give me her name my ungovernable curiosity will set me to working the matter out for myself, and it is quite as likely as not that I shall go to the House of Martha, and ask questions, and pry, and watch, and make no end of trouble. If a blooming bride is to be picked out of that flock of ash-colored gruel-mixers, I want to know who it is to be. I used to be acquainted with a good many of them, but I have n't visited the House for some time."

I had never known any one assume toward me a position so unjustifiable and so unseemly as that in which this lady had deliberately placed herself. I could find no words to express my opinion of her conduct, and was on the point of walking away, when she rose and quickly stepped to my side.

"Don't go away angry," she said. "On this island we don't get angry; it is too conventional. I am bound to find out all about this affair, because it interests me. It is something quite out of the common; and although you are in a measure right in saying that I have nothing to do with your affairs, you must know you have in a measure mixed yourself up with my affairs. I am one of the original subscribers to the House

of Martha, and used to take a good deal of interest in the establishment, as was my right and privilege; but the sisters bored me after a time, and as I have been traveling in Europe for more than a year I now know very little of what has been going on there. But if there is a young woman in that house who prefers marriage to hospital life and tailor-made costumes to ash-bags, I say that she has mistaken her vocation, and ought to be helped out of it; and although I know you to be a pretty peppery gentleman, I am perfectly willing to help her in your direction, if that is the way she wants to go. I offer myself to you as an ally. Take me on your side, and tell me all about it. It would be perfectly ridiculous to let me go down there imagining that this or that underdone-griddle-cake-faced young woman was your lady-love. I might make mistakes, and do more harm than good."

"Madam," I replied, "let us have done with this. I have never said one word to the young lady in question of my feelings toward her, and it is in the highest degree improper and unjust that she should be discussed in connection with them. I have laid the matter before Mother Anastasia, as she stands in position of parent to the young lady; but with no one else can I possibly act, or even discuss the subject," and I bowed.

"I don't like this," she said, without noticing that I had taken leave of her. "Mother Anastasia did not intend to leave here until to-morrow, and she went away early this morning. She has some pressing business on hand, and ten chances to one she has gone to fillip your young lady out of your sight and hearing. Don't you see that it would not look at all well for one of her sisters to marry, or even to receive the attentions of a gentleman, immediately after she had left the institution?"

This suggestion, so like my own suspicions, greatly disturbed me.

"Are you in earnest," said I, "or is

all this chaffer? What reasonable interest can you take in me and my affairs?"

"I take no interest whatever," said she, "excepting that I have heard you are both eccentric and respectable, and that I have found you amusing, and in this class of people I am always interested. But I will say to you that if there is a woman in that House who might make a suitable and satisfactory marriage, if an opportunity were allowed her, I believe she should be allowed the opportunity, and, acting upon general principles of justice and a desire to benefit my fellow-mortals, I should use my influence to give it to her. So you see that I should really be acting for the girl, and not for you, although of course it would amount to the same thing. And if Mother Anastasia has gone to pull down the curtain on this little drama, I am all the more anxious to jerk it up again. Come, now, Mr. Lover in Check, — and when I first heard your name I had no idea how well it fitted, — confide in me. It would delight me to be in this fight; and you can see for yourself that it would be a very humdrum matter for me to join your opponents, even if I should be of their opinion. They do not need my help."

This argument touched me. I needed help. Should Mother Anastasia choose to close the doors of the House of Martha against me, what could I do? It might divert this lady to act on my behalf. If she procured an interview for me with Sylvia, I would ask no more of her. There was nothing to risk except that Sylvia might be offended if she heard that she had been the object of compacts. But something must be risked, otherwise I might be simply butting my head against monastic brick-work.

"Madam," said I, "whatever your motives may be, I accept your offer to fight on my side, and the sooner the battle begins the better. The young



lady to whom I wish to offer myself in marriage, and with whom I am most eager to meet, is Miss Sylvia Raynor, a novice, or something of the kind, in the House of Martha."

With her brows slightly knitted, as if she did not exactly understand my words, my companion looked at me for an instant. Then her eyes sparkled, her lips parted, and a flush of quick comprehension passed over her face. She put back her head and laughed until she almost lost her breath. I looked upon her, shocked and wounded to the soul.

"Pardon me," she said, her eyes filled with the tears of laughter, "but it can't be helped; I withdraw my offer. I cannot be on your side, at least just now. But I shall remain neutral,—you can count on that," and, still laughing, she went her way.

Any one more disagreeably unpleasant than this woman I had never met. When I told Walkirk what had happened I could not restrain my burning indignation, and I declared I would not remain another hour on the island with her. He listened to me with grave concern.

"This is very unfortunate," he said, "but do not let us be precipitate."

## XXVIII.

### THE FLOATING GROCERY.

I now positively decided that the next day I would leave this island, where people flew off at such disagreeable tangents; but as I was here on invitation, I could not go away without taking leave of my hostess. Accordingly, in the evening Walkirk and I went up to the house.

The Sand Lady was manifestly grieved when she heard of our intended departure, and her brother was quite demonstrative in his expressions of regret; even the Shell Man, who had dis-

covered in Walkirk some tastes similar to his own, demurred at our going. The Person, however, made no allusion to the subject, and gave us, indeed, as little of her society as she apparently did of her thoughts.

In order not to produce the impression that I was running after Mother Anastasia, as Walkirk had put it, I announced that we should continue our cruise for an indefinite time. I was sorry to leave these good people, but to stay with that mocking enigma of a woman was impossible. She had possessed herself, in the most crafty and unwarrantable manner, of information which she had no right to receive and I had no right to give, and then contemptuously laughed in my face. My weakness may have deserved the contempt, but that made no difference in my opinion of the woman who had inflicted it upon me. I was glad, when we bade good-night and farewell to the little party, that the Person was not present.

But early the next morning, just as we were hoisting sail on our boat, this lady appeared, walking rapidly down to our beach. She was dressed in a light morning costume, with some sort of a gauzy fabric thrown over her head, and if I had not hated her so thoroughly I should have considered her a very picturesque and attractive figure.

"I am glad I am in time," she called out. "I don't want you to go away with too bad an opinion of me, and I came to say that what you have confided to me is just as safe with me as it would be with anybody else. Do you think you can believe that if you try?"

It was impossible for me to make any answer to this woman, but I took off my hat and bowed. The sail filled, and we glided away.

Walkirk was not in good spirits. It was plain enough that he liked the Tangent island and wanted to stay; and he had good reason, for he had found pleasant company, and this could not always

be said to be the case when sailing in a small boat or camping out with me. My intention was to sail to a town on the mainland, some thirty miles distant, there leave our boat, and take a train for Arden. This, I considered, was sacrificing to appearances as much time as I could allow.

But the breeze was light and fitful, and we made but little progress, and about the middle of the forenoon a fog came slowly creeping up from the sea. It grew thicker and heavier, until in an hour or two we were completely shut out from all view of the world about us. There was now no wind. Our sail hung damp and flabby; moisture, silence, and obscurity were upon us.

The rest of the day we sat doleful, waiting for the fog to lift and the wind to rise. My fear was that we might drift out to sea or upon some awkward shoals; for, though everything else was still, the tide would move us. What Walkirk feared, if anything, I do not know, but he kept up a good heart, and rigged a lantern some little distance aloft, which, he said, might possibly keep vessels from running into us. He also performed, at intervals, upon a cornet which he had brought with him. This was a very wise thing to do, but, for some reason or other, such music, in a fog, depressed my spirits; however, as it seemed quite suitable to the condition of my affairs I did not interfere, and the notes of Bonnie Doon or My Old Kentucky Home continued to be soaked into the fog.

Night came on; the fog still enveloped us, and the situation became darker. We had our supper, and I turned in, with the understanding that at midnight I was to take the watch, and let Walkirk sleep. It was of no use to make ourselves any more uncomfortable than need be.

It was between two and three o'clock when I was called to go on watch; and after I had been sitting in the stern

smoking and thinking for an hour or more, I noticed that the light on the mast had gone out. It was, however, growing lighter, and, fancying that the fog was thinner, I trusted to the coming of the day and a breeze, and made no attempt to take down and refill the lantern.

Not long after this my attention was attracted by something which appeared like the nucleus of a dark cloud forming in the air, a short distance above the water, and not far away on our port quarter. Rapidly the cloud grew bigger and blacker. It moved toward us, and in a few moments, before I had time to collect my thoughts and arouse Walkirk, it was almost upon us, and then I saw that it was the stern of a vessel, looming high above my head.

I gave a wild shout; Walkirk dashed out of his bunk; there was a call from above; then I felt a shock, and our boat keeled over on her starboard side. In a moment, however, she receded from the other vessel, and righted herself. I do not know that Walkirk had ever read in a book what he ought to do in such an emergency, but he seized a boat hook and pushed our boat away from the larger vessel.

"That's right!" cried a voice from above. "I'll heave ye a line. Keep her off till we have drifted past ye, and then I'll haul ye in."

Slowly the larger vessel, which was not very large, but which drifted faster than our little boat, floated past us, until we were in tow at her bow. We could now see the form of a man leaning over the rail of the vessel, and he called out to us to know if we were damaged, and if we wanted to come aboard. I was about to reply that we were all right, and would remain where we were, when Walkirk uttered an exclamation.

"We are taking in water by the bucketful," said he; "our side has been stove in."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed. "We



were not struck with enough force for that."

But examination proved that he was correct. One or more of our planks had been broken just below the water line, and our boat was filling, though not rapidly.

"Stove in, eh?" shouted the voice from above. "Well, ye need n't sink. I'll haul yer bowline taut, and I'll heave ye another to make fast to yer stern. That'll keep yer little craft afloat until ye can unlade her; and the quicker ye get yer traps up here the better, if ye don't want 'em soaked."

Acting upon these suggestions, Walkirk and I went vigorously to work, and passed up our belongings as rapidly as possible to the man above, who, by leaning over the rails, could easily reach them. When everything movable had been taken out of our boat the man let down a ladder, and I climbed on board the larger vessel, after which he came down to our boat, detached the boom, gaff, and sail, unshipped the mast, all of which we afterwards hoisted on board his vessel by means of a block and tackle.

"Now, then," said our new companion, "ye're safe, and yer boat can capsize if it's a mind to, but it can't sink; and when it's better daylight, and Abner's on deck, perhaps we'll rig out a couple of spars and haul her up at the stern; but there's time enough to settle all that. And now I'd like to know how ye came to be driftin' around here with no light out."

I explained, but added I had not seen any light on his vessel.

"Well," said the man, looking upward, "that light's out, and ten to one it was out when we run inter ye. I 'spect Abner did n't calkerlate for fillin' it for day work and night work too."

The speaker was a grizzled man, middle-aged, and rather too plump for a sailor. He had a genial, good-natured countenance, and so far as I could see was the only occupant of the vessel.

His craft was truly a peculiar one. It was sloop-rigged, and on the after part of the deck, occupying about one third of the length of the vessel, was a structure resembling a small one-storied house, which rose high above the rest of the deck, like the poop of an old-fashioned man-of-war. In the gable end of this house, which faced upon the deck, there was a window and a door. The boom of the mast was rigged high enough to allow it to sweep over the roof.

"I reckon you gents think this is a queer kind of a craft," said the man, with a grin of pleasure at our evident curiosity; "and if ye think that ye are about right, for there is n't jist such another one as far as I know. This is a floating grocery, and I am captain of the sloop or keeper of the store, jist as it happens. In that house there is a good stock of flour, sugar, feed, trimmings, notions, and small dry goods, with some tinware and pottery, and a lot of other things which you commonly find in a country grocery store. I have got the trade of about half the families in this bay; all of them on the islands, and a good many of them on the mainland, especially sech as has piers of their own. I have regular days for touching at all the different p'int; and it is a mighty nice thing, I can tell ye, to have yer grocery store come round to ye instead of yer having to go to it, especially if ye live on an island or out in the country."

Walkirk and I were very much interested in this floating grocery store, which was an entirely novel thing to us, and we asked a good many questions about it.

"There's only me and Abner aboard," said the grocer-skipper, "but that's enough, for we do a good deal more anchorin' than sailin'. Abner, he's head clerk, and don't pretend to be no sailor at all; but he lays a hold of anythin' I tell him to, and that's all I ask of him in the sailerin' line. But he is first class

behind the counter, I can tell ye, and in keepin' the books I could n't find nobody like Abner, — not in this State. Now it may strike ye, gents, that I am not much of a sailor neither, to be driftin' about here at night in this fog instead of anchorin' and tootin' a fog-horn; but ye see, I did anchor in the fore part of the night, and after Abner had gone to his bunk — we don't keep regular watches, but kinder divide the night between us, when we are out on the bay, which is n't common, for we like to tie up at night, and do our sailin' in the daytime — it struck me that as the tide was runnin' out we might as well let it take us to Simpson's Bar, which, if ye don't know this bay, is a big shallow place, where there is always water enough for us, bein' a good deal on the flat-bottomed order, but where almost any steamin' craft at low tide would stick in the mud before they could run into us. So thinks I, If we want to get on in the direction of Widder Kinley's (whose is the last house I serve down the bay), and to feel safe besides, we had better up anchor, and I upped it. But I had ought to remembered about that light; it was n't the square thing to be driftin' about without the light, no more fur me than fur ye. I've sounded a good many times, but we don't seem to have reached the bar yet. It must be pretty near time for Abner to turn out," and he looked at his watch.

"Your assistant must be a sound sleeper," I remarked.

"Yes, he is," replied the man. "He needs lots of sleep, and I make it a p'int to give it to him. If it is n't positively necessary, I don't wake him up until the regular time. Of course, if it had been our boat that had been stoved in, and she had been like to sink, I'd have called Abner; but as it was yer boat, and none of us was in no danger, I did n't call him. Here he is, though, on time."

At this, a tall, lean man, not quite so

much grizzled as the other, made his appearance on deck. He gazed from one to the other of us, and upon our various belongings, which were strewn upon the deck, with undisguised amazement.

His companion laughed aloud. "I don't wonder, Abner," he cried, "that ye open yer eyes; 'tain't often two gentlemen come on board in the night, bag and baggage; but these two stoved in their boat agin our rudder, and here they are, with their own craft triced up to keep her from sinkin'."

Abner made no answer, but walked to the side of the vessel, looked over, and satisfied himself that this last statement was correct.

"Capt'n Jabe," said he, turning to the other, "we can't sail much, can we, with that thing hangin' there?"

"Well, now, Abner," replied the captain, "we are not sailin' at the present time, — we are driftin'; for it is my idee to drop anchor as soon as we get to Simpson's Bar, and this tide is bound to carry us over it if we wait long enough, so we must keep soundin', and not slip over without knowin' it."

"It strikes me," said Abner, "that we should save a lot of trouble if we should put the anchor out and let it hang; then, when we come to the bar, she'll ketch and fetch us up without our havin' it on our minds."

"You see, gents," said Captain Jabe to us, "Abner don't pretend to be no sailor, but he's got his idee about navigation, for all that."

Abner took no notice of this remark. "Capt'n," said he, "does these gents want to turn in?"

"Not till they have had some breakfast," replied Captain Jabe, and we assented.

"All right," said Abner, "I'll tackle the grub," and, opening the door of the grocery store, he went inside. In a few minutes he reappeared. "Capt'n," said he, in a voice which he intended

to be an aside, "are you goin' to count 'em as mealers, or as if they was visitin' the family?"

Captain Jabe laughed. "Well, Abner," said he, "I guess we will count them as mealers, though I don't intend to make no charge."

Abner nodded, and again entered the little house.

"What are mealers?" I asked of the captain.

"In this part of the country," he answered, "there's a good many city folks comes for the summer, and they take houses; but they don't want the trouble of cookin', so they make a contract with some one livin' near to give them their meals regular, and this sort of folks goes by the general name of mealers. What Abner wanted to know fur was about openin' the cans. You see, most of our victuals is in cans, and if Abner knowed you was regular payin' mealers he would open fresh ones; but if you was visitin' the family, he'd make you help eat up what was left in the cans, just as we do ourselves."

It was not long before the thrifty Abner had given us a substantial breakfast; and then Walkirk and I were glad to take possession of a spare couple of bunks, for we were tired and sleepy, and the monotonous fog still hung around us.

It was about noon when I waked and went on deck, where I found Walkirk, Captain Jabe, and Abner engaged in consultation. There was a breeze blowing, and every particle of fog had disappeared.

"We've been considerin'," said the captain, addressing me, "what's the best thing to do with yer boat; there's no use tryin' to tinker her up, for she has got a bad hole in her, and it is our fault, too. One of the iron bands on our rudder got broke and sprung out a good while ago, and it must have been the sharp end of that which punched into yer boat when we drifted down on her. We ain't got no tackle suitable to

h'ist her on board, and as to towin' her, — a big boat like that, full of water, — 'tain't possible. We've lost a lot of time already, and now there's a good wind and we are bound to make the best of it; so me and Abner thinks the best thing ye can do is to sink yer boat right here on the bar where we are now anchored, having struck it all right, as ye see, and mark the spot with an oil-cag. Anybody that knows this bay can come and git her if she is on Simpson's Bar, buoyed with an oil-cag."

I was sorry that we should not be able to repair our boat and continue our trip in her, but I saw that this would be impossible, and I asked Captain Jabe if he could take us to Brimley.

"I can do that," he answered, "but not straight. I have got fust to sail over to Widder Kinley's, which is on that p'int which ye can just see over there on the edge of the water, and where I was due yesterday afternoon. Then I've got to touch at three or four other places along the east shore; and then, if this wind holds, I guess I can git across the bay to my own house, where I have got to lay up all day to-morrow. The next day is Saturday, and then I am bound to be in Brimley to take in stock. There ye two gents can take the cars for wherever ye want to go; and if ye choose to give me the job of raisin' yer boat and sendin' it to its owners, I'll do it for ye as soon as I can fix things suitable, and will charge ye just half price for the job, considerin' that nuther of us had our lights out, and we ought to share damages."

I agreed to the proposed disposition of our boat, and asked Captain Jabe if I could not hire him to take us direct to Brimley.

"No, sir!" he answered. "I never pass by my customers, especially Widder Kinley, for she is the farthest off of any of them."

"And she must be lookin' out sharp

for us, too," said Abner, "for she bakes Thursdays, and she ought to sot her bread last night."

"And I am a great deal afeard," continued Captain Jabe, "that her yeast cakes won't be any too fresh when she gits 'em; and the quicker that boat's down to the bottom and our anchor up off the bottom, the better it will be for the Widder Kinley's batch of bread."

In the course of half an hour an empty oil-keg was moored over the spot where our boat lay upon the sandy bar, and we were sailing as fast as such an unwieldy vessel, with her mainsail permanently reefed above the roof of her grocery store, could be expected to sail. Our tacks were long and numerous, and although Walkirk and I lent a hand whenever there was occasion for it, and although there was a fair wind, the distant point rose but slowly upon our horizon.

"I hope," I remarked to Captain Jabe, "that the Widow Kinley will buy a good bill of you, after you have taken all this trouble to get to her."

"Dunno," said he; "she don't generally take more than she has ordered the week before, and all she has ordered this time is two yeast cakes."

"Do you mean," exclaimed Walkirk, "that you are taking all this time and trouble to deliver two yeast cakes, worth, I suppose, four cents?"

"That's the price on 'em," said the captain; "but if the Widder Kinley did n't git 'em she would n't do no bakin' this week, and that would upset her housekeepin' keel up."

Late in the afternoon we delivered the yeast cakes to the Widow Kinley, whom we found in a state of nervous agitation, having begun to fear that another night would pass without her bread being "sot." Then we coasted along the shore, tying up at various little piers, where the small farmers' and fishermen's families came on board to make purchases.

Now Abner was in his glory. Wearing a long apron made of blue-and-white bed-ticking, he stood behind the counter in the little house on deck, and appeared to be much more at ease weighing sugar, coffee, and flour than in assisting to weigh anchor. I seated myself in the corner of this floating grocery, crowded, shelves, floor, and counter, with such goods as might be expected to be found at an ordinary country store.

It seemed to me that nearly every one who lived near the points at which we touched came on board the floating grocery, but most of them came to talk, and not to buy. Many of those who did make purchases brought farm produce or fish, with which to "trade." It was an interesting spectacle, and amused me. During our slow progress from one place to another, Captain Jabe told me of an old woman who once offered him an egg which she wished to take out in groceries, half in tea and half in snuff.

"We don't often do business down as fine as that," said the captain; "but then, on the other hand, we don't calkulate to supply hotels, and could n't if we wanted to."

Walkirk appeared uneasy at the detentions which still awaited us.

"Could n't you take us straight on to Brimley," he asked of the captain, "and sail back to your home in the morning?"

"No, sir!" answered Captain Jabe, with much decision. "My old woman 'spects me to-night, — in p'int of fact, she 'spected me a good deal before night, — and I am not goin' to have her thinkin' I am run down in a fog, and am now engaged in feedin' the sharks. There is to be a quilting party at our house to-morrow arternoon, and there's a lot to be done to get ready for it. Abner and me will have to set up pretty late this night, I can tell yer!"

"Is there no way of getting to the railroad," I asked, "but by your boat?"

"No," said Captain Jabe, "I can't see that there is. Pretty nigh all the

folks that will be at the bee to-morrow will come in boats. None of them live nigh to a railroad station, and if they did, and could take ye back with 'em, they would n't leave early enough for

ye to ketch the last train: so the best thing ye can do is to stick by me, and I'll guarantee to git ye over to Brimley in time for the mornin' train on Saturday."

*Frank R. Stockton.*

## ARNOLD WINKELRIED AT SEMPACH.

THE comprehensive view which is obtained from the various peaks of the Rigi affords the best possible introduction to the study of Swiss history. Almost every spot celebrated in the annals of the early Confederation or hallowed by its traditions is visible from this height; and when not actually visible can readily be located with the help of a map. Of course the eye rests first upon the matchless snow mountains rearing their crests upon the horizon in an unbroken phalanx; but when you look down and examine the country lying near the base of the Rigi, historical points without end disclose themselves. Here is the Lake of *Ægeri*, where the battle of Morgarten was fought and won; on this side lies the village of Schwyz, from which the whole Confederation derives its name; in another direction, half hidden amongst the trees, is the chapel erected where William Tell is supposed to have shot Gessler from ambush; and in the distance faint indications of the city of Zürich and of the castle of Habsburg may be discovered.

There are two places, however, seen from the Rigi which concern us especially in treating of Arnold Winkelried and the battle of Sempach. Look out upon the rolling land of forest and meadow to the northwest, and you will notice three small lakes imbedded in the hills. The most westerly of the three is the Lake of Sempach, near which the battle of that name took place, more than five hundred years ago.

Then turn towards the southwest and examine the canton of Unterwalden, which occupies the southern shore of the Lake of Lucerne. You will perceive that the canton is divided into two natural sections by a range of mountains extending back from the Stanzerhorn to the snow-clad peak of the Titlis. The fact that a great forest formerly covered part of this range caused the two valleys to be called respectively Obwalden (Above-the-Forest) and Nidwalden (Below-the-Forest). In the latter division is situated a village of great antiquity, Stans, the home of the Winkelried family. It lies a mile or two from the water's edge, and is easily distinguishable from the Rigi-Kulm.

The traveler will not find much of interest in the village itself. At the eastern extremity stands an ancient stone house, which, although known locally as the Winkelried homestead, was more likely the property of the Counts of Habsburg, and in the little arsenal is shown a coat of mail which is said to have been the hero's own, but with no better reason than popular say-so. A modern marble group, by Schlöth, in the village square is the most prominent object and show-piece of Stans. It represents Arnold Winkelried in the act of pressing the Austrian spears into his breast and holding them down, while a second figure from the ranks of the Confederates pushes forward to take advantage of the gap thus created in the Austrian line. The latter warrior swings on high a