

APRIL HOPES.

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

XIV.

THE day of the picnic struggled till ten o'clock to peer through the fog that wrapt it with that remote damp and coolness and that nearer drouth and warmth which some fogs have. The low pine groves hung full of it, and it gave a silvery definition to the gossamer threads running from one grass spear to another in spacious net-works over the open levels of the old fields that stretch back from the bluff to the woods. At last it grew thinner, somewhere over the bay; then you could see the smooth water through it; then it drifted off in ragged fringes before a light breeze; when you looked landward again it was all gone there, and seaward it had gathered itself in a low, dun bank along the horizon. It was the kind of fog that people interested in Campobello admitted as apt to be common there, but claimed as a kind of local virtue when it began to break away. They said that it was a very dry fog, not like Newport, and asked you to notice that it did not wet you at all.

Four or five carriages, driven by the gentlemen of the party, held the picnic, which was destined for that beautiful cove on the Bay of Fundy where the red granite ledges, smooth-washed by ages of storm and sun, lend themselves to such festivities as if they had been artificially fashioned into shelves and tables. The whole place is yet so new to men that this haunt has not acquired that air of repulsive custom which the egg-shells and broken bottles and sardine boxes of many seasons give. Or perhaps the winter tempests heap the tides of the bay over the ledge, and wash it clean of these vulgar traces of human resort, and enable it to offer as fresh a welcome to the picnics of each successive summer as if there had never been a picnic in that place before.

This was the sense that Maverick professed to have received from it, when he jumped out of the beach wagon in which he had preceded the other carriages through the weird forest lying between the fringe of farm fields and fishing villages on the western shore of the island and these lonely coasts of the bay. As far as the signs

of settled human habitation last, the road is the good hard country road of New England, climbing steep little hills, and presently leading through long tracts of woodland. But at a certain point beyond the farthest cottage you leave it, and plunge deep into the heart of the forest, vaguely traversed by the wheel path carried through since the island was opened to summer sojourn. Road you can hardly call it, remembering its curious pauses and hesitations when confronted with stretches of marshy ground, and its staggering progress over the thick stubble of saplings through which it is cut. The progress of teams over it is slow, but there is such joy of wildness in the solitudes it penetrates that if the horses had any gait slower than a walk, one might still wish to stay them. It is a Northern forest, with the air of having sprung quickly up in the fierce heat and haste of the Northern summers. The small firs are set almost as dense as rye in a field, and in their struggle to the light they have choked one another so that there is a strange blight of death and defeat on all that vigor of life. Few of the trees have won any lofty growth; they seem to have died and fallen when they were about to outstrip the others in size, and from their decay a new sylvan generation riots rankly upward. The surface of the ground is thinly clothed with a deciduous undergrowth, above which are the bare, spare stems of the evergreens, and then their limbs thrusting into one another in a sombre tangle, with locks of long yellowish-white moss, like the gray pendants of the Southern pines, dripping from them and draining their brief life.

In such a place you must surrender yourself to its influences, profoundly yet vaguely melancholy, or you must resist them with whatever gayety is in you, or may be conjured out of others. It was conceded that Maverick was the life of the party, as the phrase goes. His light-heartedness, as kindly and sympathetic as it was inexhaustible, served to carry them over the worst places in the road of itself. He jumped down and ran back, when he had passed a bad bit, to see if the others were getting through safely; the least interesting of the party had some proof of

his impartial friendliness; he promised an early and triumphant emergence from all difficulties; he started singing, and sacrificed himself in several tunes, for he could not sing well; his laugh seemed to be always coming back to Alice, where she rode late in the little procession; several times, with the deference which he delicately qualified for her, he came himself to see if he could not do something for her.

"Miss Pasmer," croaked her friend Miss Anderson, who always began in that ceremonious way with her, and got to calling her Alice farther along in the conversation, "if you don't drop something for that poor fellow to run back two or three miles and get, pretty soon, I'll do it myself. It's perfectly disheartening to see his disappointment when you tell him they're nothing to be done."

"He seems to get over it," said Alice, evasively. She smiled with pleasure in Miss Anderson's impeachment, however.

"Oh, he keeps coming, if that's what you mean. But do drop an umbrella, or a rubber, or something, next time, just to show a proper appreciation."

But Maverick did not come any more. Just before they got to the cove, Miss Anderson leaned over again to whisper in Alice's ear, "I told you he was huyt. Now you must be very good to him the rest of the time."

Upon theory a girl of Alice Pasmer's reserve ought to have resented this intervention, but it is not probable she did. She flushed a little, but not with offence, apparently; and she was kinder to Maverick, and let him do everything for her that he could invent in transferring the things from the wagons to the rocks.

The party gave a gayety to the wild place which accentuated its proper charm, as they scattered themselves over the ledges on the bright shawls spread upon the level spaces. On either hand craggy bluffs hemmed the cove in, but below the ledge it had a pebbly beach strewn with drift-wood, and the Bay of Fundy gloomed before it with small fishing-craft tipping and tilting on the swell in the foreground, and dim sail melting into the dun fog-bank at the horizon's edge.

The elder ladies of the party stood up, or stretched themselves on the shawls, as they found this or that posture more restful after their long drive; one, who was skilled in making coffee, had taken pos-

session of the pot, and was demanding fire and water for it. The men scattered themselves over the beach, and brought her drift enough to roast an ox; two of them fetched water from the spring at the back of the ledge, whither they then carried the bottles of ale to cool in its thrilling pool. Each after his or her fashion symbolized a return to nature by some act or word of self-abandon.

"You ought to have brought heavier shoes," said Mrs. Pasmer, with a serious glance at her daughter's feet. "Well, never mind," she added. "It doesn't matter if you *do* spoil them."

"Really," cried Mrs. Brinkley, casting her sandals from her, "I will not be enslaved to rubbers in such a sylvan scene as this, at any rate."

"Look at Mrs. Stamwell!" said Miss Cotton. "She's actually taken her hat off."

Mrs. Stamwell had not only gone to this extreme, but had tied a lightly fluttering handkerchief round her hair. She said she should certainly not put on that heavy thing again till she got in sight of civilization.

At these words Miss Cotton boldly drew off her gloves and put them in her pocket.

The young girls, slim in their blue flannel skirts and their broad white canvas belts, went and came over the rocks. There were some children in the party, who were allowed to scream uninterruptedly in the games of chase and hide-and-seek which they began to play as soon as they found their feet after getting out of the wagons.

Some of the gentlemen drove a stake into the beach, and threw stones at it, to see which could knock off the pebble balanced on its top. Several of the ladies joined them in the sport, and shrieked and laughed when they made wild shots with the missiles the men politely gathered for them.

Alice had remained with Maverick to help the hostess of the picnic lay the tables, but her mother had followed those who went down to the beach. At first Mrs. Pasmer looked on at the practice of the stone-throwers with disapproval; but suddenly she let herself go in this, as she did in other matters that her judgment condemned, and began to throw stones herself; she became excited, and made the wildest shots of any, accepting missiles right and left, and making herself

dangerous to everybody within a wide circle. A gentleman who had fallen a victim to her skill said, "Just wait, Mrs. Pasmer, till I get in front of the stake."

The men became seriously interested, and worked themselves red and hot; the ladies soon gave it up, and sat down on the sand and began to talk. They all owned themselves hungry, and from time to time they looked up anxiously at the preparations for lunch on the ledge, where white napkins were spread, with bottles at the four corners to keep them from blowing away. This use of the bottles was considered very amusing; the ladies tried to make jokes about it, and the desire to be funny spread to certain of the men who had quietly left off throwing at the stake because they had wrenched their shoulders; they succeeded in being merry. They said they thought that coffee took a long time to boil.

A lull of expectation fell upon all; even Maverick sat down on the rocks near the fire, and was at rest a few minutes, by order of Miss Anderson, who said that the sight of his activity tired her to death.

"I wonder why always boiled ham at a picnic?" said the lady who took a final plate of it from a basket. "Under the ordinary conditions, few of us can be persuaded to touch it."

"It seems to be dear to nature, and to nature's children," said Mrs. Brinkley. "Perhaps because their digestions are strong."

"Don't you wish that something could be substituted for it?" asked Miss Cotton.

"There have been efforts to replace it with chicken and tongue in sandwiches," said Mrs. Brinkley; "but I think they've only measurably succeeded—about as temperance drinks have in place of the real strong waters."

"On the boat coming up," said Maverick, "we had a troupe of genuine darky minstrels. One of them sang a song about ham that rather took me.

"Ham, good old ham!
Ham is de best ob meat;
It's always good and sweet;
You can bake it, you can boil it,
You can fry it, you can broil it—
Ham, good old ham!"

"Oh, how good!" sighed Mrs. Brinkley. "How sincere! How native! Go on, Mr. Maverick, forever."

"I haven't the materials," said Maver-

ick, with his laugh. "The rest was *da capo*. But there was another song, about a colored lady:

"Six foot high and eight foot round,
Holler ob her foot made a hole in de ground."

"Ah, that's an old friend," said Mrs. Brinkley. "I remember hearing of that colored lady when I was a girl. But it's a fine flight of the imagination. What else did they sing?"

"I can't remember. But there was something they danced—to show how a rheumatic old colored uncle dances."

He jumped nimbly up, and sketched the stiff and limping figure he had seen. It was over in a flash. He dropped down again, laughing.

"Oh, how wonderfully good!" cried Mrs. Brinkley, with frank joy. "Do it again."

"Encore! Oh, encore!" came from the people on the beach.

Maverick jumped to his feet, and burlesqued the profuse bows of an actor who refuses to repeat; he was about to drop down again amidst their wails of protest.

"No, don't sit down, Mr. Maverick," said the lady who had introduced the subject of ham. "Get some of the young ladies and go and gather some blueberries for the dessert. There are all the necessities of life here, but none of the luxuries."

"I'm at the service of the young ladies as an escort," said Maverick, gallantly, with an infusion of joke. "Will you come and pick blueberries under my watchful eyes, Miss Pasmer?"

"They've gone to pick blueberries," called the lady through her tubed hand to the people on the beach, and the younger among them scrambled up the rocks for cups and bowls to follow them.

Mrs. Pasmer had an impulse to call her daughter back, and to make some excuse to keep her from going. She was in an access of decorum, naturally following upon her late outbreak, and it seemed a very pronounced thing for Alice to be going off into the woods with the young man; but it would have been a pronounced thing to prevent her, and so Mrs. Pasmer submitted.

"Isn't it delightful," asked Mrs. Brinkley, following them with her eyes, "to see the charm that gay young fellow has for that serious girl? She looked at him while he was dancing as if she couldn't

take her eyes off him, and she followed him as if he drew her by an invisible spell. Not that spells are ever *visible*," she added, saving herself. "Though this one *seems* to be," she added further, again saving herself.

"Do you really think so?" pleaded Miss Cotton.

"Well, I *say* so, whatever I think. And I'm not going to be caught up on the tender-hooks of conscience as to *all* my meanings, Miss Cotton. I don't *know* them all. But I'm not one of the Aliceolators, you know."

"No; of course not. But shouldn't you— Don't you think it would be a great pity— She's *so* superior, so *very* uncommon in every way, that it hardly seems— Ah, I should so like to see some one really *fine*—not a coarse fibre in him, don't you know. Not that Mr. Maverick's coarse. But beside her he does seem so light!"

"Perhaps that's the reason she likes him."

"No, no! I can't believe that. She *must* see more in him than we can."

"I dare say she thinks she does. At any rate, it's a perfectly evident case on both sides; and the frank way he's followed her up here, and devoted himself to her, as if—well, not as if she were the only girl in the world, but incomparably the best—is certainly not common."

"No," sighed Miss Cotton, glad to admit it; "that's beautiful."

XV.

In the edge of the woods and the open spaces among the trees the blueberries grew larger and sweeter in the late Northern summer than a more southern sun seems to make them. They hung dense upon the low bushes, and gave them their tint through the soft gray bloom that veiled their blue. Sweet-fern in patches broke their mass here and there, and exhaled its wild perfume to the foot or skirt brushing through it.

"I don't think there's anything much prettier than these clusters; do you, Miss Pasmer?" asked Maverick, as he lifted a bunch pendent from the little tree before he stripped it into the bowl he carried. "And see! it spoils the bloom to gather them." He held out a handful, and then tossed them away. "It ought to be

managed more aesthetically for an occasion like this. I'll tell you what, Miss Pasmer: are you used to blueberrying?"

"No," she said; "I don't know that I ever went blueberrying before. Why?" she asked.

"Because, if you haven't, you wouldn't be very efficient perhaps, and so you might resign yourself to sitting on that log and holding the berries in your lap, while I pick them."

"But what about the bowls, then?"

"Oh, never mind them. I've got an idea. See here!" He clipped off a bunch with his knife, and held it up before her, tilting it this way and that. "Could anything be more graceful? My idea is to serve the blueberry on its native stem at this picnic. What do you think? Sugar would profane it, and of course they've only got milk enough for the coffee."

"Delightful!" Alice arranged herself on the log, and made a lap for the bunch. He would not allow that the arrangement was perfect till he had cushioned the seat and carpeted the ground for her feet with sweet-fern.

"Now you're something *like* a wood-nymph," he laughed. "Only, wouldn't a *real* wood-nymph have an apron?" he asked, looking down at her dress.

"Oh, it won't hurt the dress. You must begin now, or they'll be calling us."

He was standing and gazing at her with a distracted enjoyment of her pose. "Oh, yes, yes," he answered, coming to himself, and he set about his work.

He might have got on faster if he had not come to her with nearly every bunch he cut at first, and when he began to deny himself this pleasure he stopped to admire an idea of hers.

"Well, that's charming—making them into bouquets."

"Yes, isn't it?" she cried, delightedly, holding a bunch of the berries up at arm's-length to get the effect.

"Ah, but you must have some of this fern and this tall grass to go with it. Why, it's sweet-grass—the sweet-grass of the Indian baskets!"

"Is it?" She looked up at him.

"And do you think that the mixture would be better than the modest simplicity of the berries, with a few leaves of the same?"

"No; you're right; it wouldn't," he said, throwing away his ferns. "But you'll want something to tie the stems

with; you must use the grass." He left that with her, and went back to his bushes. He added, from beyond a little thicket, as if what he said were part of the subject, "I was afraid you wouldn't like my skipping about there on the rocks, doing the colored uncle."

"Like it?"

"I mean—I—you thought it undignified—trivial—"

She said, after a moment: "It was *very* funny; and people do all sorts of things at picnics. That's the pleasure of it, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is; but I know you don't always like that kind of thing."

"Do I seem so very severe?" she asked.

"Oh no, not severe. I should be afraid of you if you were. I shouldn't have dared to come to Campobello."

He looked at her across the blueberry bushes. His gay speech meant everything or nothing. She could parry it with a jest, and then it would mean nothing. She let her head droop over her work, and made no answer.

"I wish you *could* have seen those fellows on the boat," said Maverick.

"Hello, Maverick!" called the voice of John Munt, from another part of the woods.

"Alice!—Miss Pasmer!" came that of Miss Anderson.

He was going to answer, when he looked at Alice. "We'll let them see if they can find us," he said, and smiled.

Alice said nothing at first; she smiled too. "You know more about the woods than I do. I suppose if they keep looking—"

"Oh yes." He came toward her with a mass of clusters which he had clipped. "How fast you do them!" he said, standing and looking down at her. "I wish you'd let me come and make up the withes for you when you need them."

"No, I couldn't allow that on any account," she answered, twisting some stems of the grass together.

"Well, will you let me hold the bunches while you tie them, or tie them while you hold them?"

"No."

"This once, then?"

"This once, perhaps."

"How little you let me do for you!" he sighed.

"That gives you a chance to do more for other people," she answered; and then she dropped her eyes, as if she had been

surprised into that answer. She made haste to add: "That's what makes you so popular with—everybody."

"Ah, but I'd rather be popular with somebody!"

He laughed, and then they both laughed together consciously; and still nothing or everything had been said. A little silly silence followed, and he said, for escape from it, "I never saw such berries before, even in September, on the top of Ponkwasset."

"Why, is it a mountain?" she asked.

"I thought it was a—falls."

"It's both," he said.

"I suppose it's very beautiful, isn't it? All America seems so lovely, so large."

"It's pretty in the summer. I don't know that I shall like it there in the winter, if I conclude to— Did your— did Mrs. Pasmer tell you what my father wants me to do?"

"About going there to—manufacture?"

Maverick nodded. "He's given me three weeks to decide whether I would like to do that or go in for law. That's what I came up here for."

There was a little pause. She bent her head down over the clusters she was grouping. "Is the light of Campobello particularly good on such questions?" she asked.

"I don't mean that exactly, but I wish you could help me to some conclusion."

"I?"

"Yes; why not?"

"It's the first time I've ever had a business question referred to me."

"Well, then, you can bring a perfectly fresh mind to it."

"Let me see," she said, affecting to consider. "It's really a very important matter?"

"It is to me."

After a moment she looked up at him. "I should think that you wouldn't mind living there if your business was there. I suppose it's being idle in places that makes them dull. I thought it was dull in London. One ought to be glad—oughtn't he?—to live in any place where there's something to do."

"Well, that isn't the way people usually feel," said Maverick. "That's the kind of a place most of them fight shy of."

Alice laughed with an undercurrent of protest, perhaps because she had seen her parents' whole life, so far as she knew it, passed in this sort of struggle. "I mean

that I hate my own life because there seems nothing for me to do with it. I like to have people do something."

"Do you really?" asked Maverig, soberly, as if struck by the novelty of the idea.

"Yes!" she said, with exaltation. "If I were a man—"

He burst into a ringing laugh. "Oh no; *don't!*"

"Why?" she demanded, with provisional indignation.

"Because then there wouldn't be any Miss Pasmer."

It seemed to Alice that this joking was rather an unwarranted liberty. Again she could not help joining in his light-heartedness; but she checked herself so abruptly, and put on a look so austere, that he was quelled by it.

"I mean," he began—"that is to say—I mean that I don't understand why ladies are always saying that. I am sure they can do what they like, as it is."

"Do you mean that everything is open to them now?" she asked, disentangling a cluster of the berries from those in her lap, and beginning a fresh bunch.

"Yes," said Maverig. "Something like that—yes. They can do anything they like. Lots of them do."

"Oh yes, I know," said the girl. "But people don't like them to."

"Why, what would you like to be?" he asked.

She did not answer, but sorted over the clusters in her lap. "We've got enough now, haven't we?" she said.

"Oh, not half," he said. "But if you're tired you must let me make up some of the bunches."

"No, no! I want to do them all myself," she said, gesturing his offered hands away, with a little nether appeal in her laughing refusal.

"So as to feel that you've been of some use in the world?" he said, dropping contentedly on the ground near her, and watching her industry.

"Do you think that would be very wrong?" she asked. "What made that friend of yours—Mr. Boardman—go into journalism?"

"Oh, virtuous poverty. You're not thinking of becoming a newspaper woman, Miss Pasmer!"

"Why not?" She put the final cluster into the bunch in hand, and began to wind a withe of sweet-grass around the

stems. He dropped forward on his knees to help her, and together they managed the knot. They were both flushed a little when it was tied, and were serious. "Why shouldn't one be a newspaper woman, if Harvard graduates are to be journalists?"

"Well, you know, only a certain kind are."

"What kind?"

"Well, not exactly what you'd call the gentlemanly sort."

"I thought Mr. Boardman was a great friend of yours?"

"He is. He is one of the best fellows in the world. But you must have seen that he wasn't a swell."

"I should think he'd be glad he was doing something at once. If I were a—" She stopped, and they laughed together. "I mean that I should hate to be so long getting ready to do something as men are."

"Then you'd rather begin making wallpaper at once than studying law?"

"Oh, I don't say that. I'm not competent to advise. But I should like to feel that I was doing something. I suppose it's hereditary." Maverig stared a little. "One of my father's sisters has gone into a sisterhood. She's in England."

"Is she a—Catholic?" asked Maverig.

"She isn't a *Roman* Catholic."

"Oh yes!" He dropped forward on his knees again to help her tie the bunch she had finished. It was not so easy as the first.

"Oh, thank you!" she said, with unnecessary fervor.

"But you shouldn't like to go into a sisterhood, I suppose?" said Maverig, ready to laugh.

"Oh, I don't know. Why not?" She looked at him with a flying glance, and dropped her eyes.

"Oh, no reason, if you have a fancy for that kind of thing."

"That kind of thing?" repeated Alice, severely.

"Oh, I don't mean anything disrespectful to it," said Maverig, throwing his anxiety off in the laugh he had been holding back. "And I *beg* your pardon. But I *don't* suppose you're in earnest."

"Oh no, I'm not in earnest," said the girl, letting her wrists fall upon her knees, and the clusters drop from her hands. "I'm not in earnest about any-

thing; that's the truth—that's the shame. Wouldn't you like," she broke off, "to be a priest, and go round among these people up here on their frozen islands in the winter?"

"No," shouted Maverig, "I certainly shouldn't. I don't see how anybody stands it. Ponkwasset Falls is bad enough in the winter, and compared to this region Ponkwasset Falls is a metropolis. I believe in getting all the good you can out of the world you were born in—of course without hurting anybody else." He stretched his legs out on the bed of sweet-fern, where he had thrown himself, and rested his head on his hand lifted on his elbow. "I think this is what this place is fit for—a picnic; and I wish every one well out of it for nine months of the year."

"I don't," said the girl, with a passionate regret in her voice. "It would be heavenly here with — But you — no, you're different. You always want to share your happiness."

"I shouldn't call that happiness. But don't you?" asked Maverig.

"No. I'm selfish."

"You don't expect me to believe that, I suppose."

"Yes," she went on, "it must be selfishness. You don't believe I'm so, because you can't imagine it. But it's true. If I were to be happy, I should be very greedy about it; I couldn't endure to let any one else have a part in it. So it's best for me to be wretched, don't you see—to give myself up entirely to doing for others, and not expect any one to do anything for me; then I can be of some use in the world. That's why I should like to go into a sisterhood."

Maverig treated it as the best kind of joke, and he was confirmed in this view of it by her laughing with him, after a first glance of what he thought mock piteousness.

XVI.

The clouds sailed across the irregular space of pale blue Northern sky which the break in the woods opened for them overhead. It was so still that they heard, and smiled to hear, the broken voices of the others who had gone to get berries in another direction—Miss Anderson's hoarse murmur and Munt's artificial bass. Some words came from the party on the rocks.

"Isn't it perfect?" cried the young fellow, in utter content.

"Yes, *too* perfect," answered the girl, rousing herself from the reverie in which they had both lost themselves, she did not know how long. "Shall you gather any more?"

"No; I guess there's enough. Let's count them." He stooped over on his hands and knees, and made as much of counting the bunches as he could. "There's about one bunch and a half apiece. How shall we carry them? We ought to come into camp as impressively as possible."

"Yes," said Alice, looking into his face with dreamy absence. It was going through her mind, from some romance she had read, What if he were some sylvan creature, with that gayety, that natural gladness and sweetness of his, so far from any happiness that was possible to her? Ought not she to be afraid of him? She was thinking she was not afraid.

"I'll tell you," he said. "Tie the stems of all the bunches together, and swing them over a pole, like grapes of Eshcol. Don't you know the picture?"

"Oh yes."

"Hold on! I'll get the pole." He cut a white birch sapling, and swept off its twigs and leaves, then he tied the bunches together, and slung them over the middle of the pole.

"Well?" she asked.

"Now we must rest the ends on our shoulders."

"Do you think so?" she asked, with the reluctance that complies.

"Yes, but not right away. I'll carry them out of the woods, and we'll form the procession just before we come in sight."

Every one on the ledge recognized the tableau when it appeared, and saluted it with cheers and hand-clapping. Mrs. Pasmer bent a look on her daughter which she faced impenetrably.

"Where have you been?" "We thought you were lost!" "We were just organizing a search expedition!" different ones shouted at them.

The lady with the coffee-pot was kneeling over it with her hand on it. "Have some coffee, you poor things! You must be almost starved."

"We looked about for you everywhere," said Munt, "and shouted ourselves dumb."

Miss Anderson passed near Alice. "I knew where you were all the time!"

Then the whole party fell to praising the novel conception of the bouquets of blueberries, and the talk began to flow away from Alice and Mavering in various channels.

All that had happened a few minutes ago in the blueberry patch seemed a far-off dream; the reality had died out of the looks and words.

He ran about from one to another, serving every one; in a little while the whole affair was in his hospitable hands, and his laugh interspersed and brightened the talk.

She got a little back of the others, and sat looking wistfully out over the bay, with her hands in her lap.

"Hold on just half a minute, Miss Pasmer! don't move!" exclaimed the amateur photographer, who is now of all excursions; he jumped to his feet and ran for his apparatus. She sat still, to please him, but when he had developed his picture, in a dark corner of the rocks roofed with a water-proof, he accused her of having changed her position. "But it's going to be splendid," he said, with another look at it.

He took several pictures of the whole party, for which they fell into various attitudes of consciousness. Then he shouted to a boat-load of sailors who had beached their craft while they gathered some drift for their galley fire. They had flung their arm-loads into the boat, and had bent themselves to shove it into the water.

"Keep still! don't move!" he yelled at them, with the imperiousness of the amateur photographer, and they obeyed with the helplessness of his victims. But they looked round.

"Oh, idiots!" groaned the artist.

"I always wonder what that kind of people think of us kind of people," said Mrs. Brinkley, with her eye on the photographer's subjects.

"Yes, I wonder what they do?" said Miss Cotton, pleased with the speculative turn which the talk might take from this. "I suppose they envy us?" she suggested.

"Well, not all of them; and those that do, not respectfully. They view us as the possessors of ill-gotten gains, who would be in a very different place if we had our deserts."

"Do you really think so?"

"Yes, I *think* so; but I don't know that I *really* think so. That's another matter,"

said Mrs. Brinkley, with the whimsical resentment which Miss Cotton's conscientious pursuit seemed always to rouse in her.

"I supposed," continued Miss Cotton, "that it was only among the poor in the cities, who have been misled by agitators, that the well-to-do classes were regarded with suspicion."

"It seems to have begun a great while ago," said Mrs. Brinkley, "and not exactly with agitators. It was considered very difficult for us to get into the kingdom of heaven, you know."

"Yes, I know," assented Miss Cotton.

"And there certainly are some things against us. Even when the chance was given us to sell all we had and give it to the poor, we couldn't bring our minds to it, and went away exceeding sorrowful."

"I wonder," said Miss Cotton, "whether those things were ever intended to be taken literally?"

"Let's hope not," said John Munt, seeing his chance to make a laugh.

Mrs. Stamwell said, "Well, I shall take another cup of coffee, at any rate," and her hardihood raised another laugh.

"That always seems to me the most pitiful thing in the whole Bible," said Alice, from her place. "To see the right so clearly, and not to be strong enough to do it."

"My dear, it happens every day," said Mrs. Brinkley.

"I always felt sorry for that poor fellow, too," said Mavering. "He seemed to be a good fellow, and it was pretty hard lines for him."

Alice looked round at him with deepening gravity.

"Confound those fellows!" said the photographer, glancing at his hastily developed plate. "They moved."

VII.

The picnic party gathered itself up after the lunch, and while some of the men, emulous of Mavering's public spirit, helped some of the ladies to pack the dishes and baskets away under the wagon seats, others threw a corked bottle into the water, and threw stones at it. A few of the ladies joined them, but nobody hit the bottle, which was finally left bobbing about on the tide.

Mrs. Brinkley addressed the defeated

group, of whom her husband was one, as they came up the beach toward the wagons. "Do you think that display was calculated to inspire the lower middle classes with respectful envy?"

Her husband made himself spokesman for the rest: "No; but you can't tell how they'd have felt if we'd hit it."

They now all climbed to a higher level, grassy and smooth, on the bluff, from which there was a particular view; and Mavering came, carrying the wraps of Mrs. Pasmer and Alice, with which he associated his overcoat. A book fell out of one of the pockets when he threw it down.

Miss Anderson picked the volume up. "Browning! He reads Browning! Superior young man!"

"Oh, don't say *that*!" pleaded Mavering.

"Oh, read something aloud!" cried another of the young ladies.

"Isn't Browning rather serious for a picnic?" he asked, with a glance at Alice; he still had a doubt of the effect of the rheumatic uncle's dance upon her, and would have been glad to give her some other æsthetic impression of him.

"Oh no!" said Mrs. Brinkley, "nothing is more appropriate to a picnic than conundrums; they always have them. Choose a good tough one."

"I don't know anything tougher than the 'Legend of Porric'—or lovelier," he said, and he began to read, simply, and with a passionate pleasure in the subtle study, feeling its control over his hearers.

The gentlemen lay smoking about at their ease; at the end a deep sigh went up from the ladies, cut short by the question which they immediately fell into.

They could not agree, but they said, one after another: "But you read beautifully, Mr. Mavering!" "Beautifully!" "Yes, indeed!"

"Well, I'm glad there is one point clear," he said, putting the book away, and "I'm afraid you'll think I'm rather sentimental," he added, in a low voice to Alice, "carrying poetry around with me."

"Oh, no!" she replied, intensely; "I thank you."

"I thank *you*," he retorted, and their eyes met in a deep look.

One of the outer circle of smokers came up with his watch in his hand, and addressed the company, "Do you know what time it's got to be? It's four o'clock."

They all sprang up with a clamor of surprise.

Mrs. Pasmer, under cover of the noise, said, in a low tone, to her daughter, "Alice, I think you'd better keep a little more with me now."

"Yes," said the girl, in a sympathy with her mother in which she did not always find herself.

But when Mavering, whom their tacit treaty concerned, turned toward them, and put himself in charge of Alice, Mrs. Pasmer found herself dispossessed by the charm of his confidence, and relinquished her to him. They were going to walk to the Castle Rocks by the path that now loses and now finds itself among the fastnesses of the forest, stretching to the loftiest outlook on the bay. The savage woodland is penetrated only by this forgetful path, that passes now and then over the bridge of a ravine, and offers to the eye on either hand the mystery deepening into wilder and weirder tracts of solitude. The party resolved itself into twos and threes, and these straggled far apart, out of conversational reach of one another. Mrs. Pasmer found herself walking and talking with John Munt.

"Mr. Pasmer hasn't much interest in these excursions," he suggested.

"No; he never goes," she answered, and by one of the agile intellectual processes natural to women she arrived at the question, "You and the Mavericks are old friends, Mr. Munt?"

"I can't say about the son, but I'm his father's friend, and I suppose that I'm *his* friend too. Everybody seems to be so," suggested Munt.

"Oh yes," Mrs. Pasmer assented; "he appears to be a universal favorite."

"We used to expect great things of Elbridge Mavering in college. We were rather more romantic than the Harvard men are nowadays, and we believed in one another more than they do. Perhaps we idealized one another. But, anyway, our class thought Mavering could do anything. You know about his taste for etchings?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Pasmer, with a sigh of deep appreciation. "What gifted people!"

"I understand that the son inherits all his father's talent."

"He sketches delightfully."

"And Mavering wrote. Why, he was our class poet!" cried Munt, remembering

the fact with surprise and gratification to himself. "He was a tremendous satirist."

"Really? And he seems so amiable now."

"Oh, it was only on paper."

"Perhaps he still keeps it up—on *wall-paper*?" suggested Mrs. Pasmer.

Munt laughed at the little joke with a good-will that flattered the veteran flatterer. "I should like to ask him that some time. Will you lend it to me?"

"Yes, if such a sayer of good things will deign to borrow—"

"Oh, Mrs. Pasmer!" cried Munt, otherwise speechless.

"And the mother? Do you know Mrs. Maverling?"

"Mrs. Maverling I've never seen."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Pasmer, with a disappointment for which Munt tried to console her.

"I've never even been at their place. He asked me once, a great while ago; but you know how those things are. I've heard that she used to be very pretty and very gay. They went about a great deal, to Saratoga and Cape May and such places—rather out of our beat."

"And now?"

"And now she's been an invalid for a great many years. Bedridden, I believe. Paralysis, I think."

"Yes; Mrs. Saintsbury said something of the kind."

"Well," said Munt, anxious to add to the store of knowledge which this remark let him understand he had not materially increased, "I think Mrs. Maverling was the origin of the wall-paper—or her money. Maverling was poor; her father had started it, and Maverling turned in his talent."

"How very interesting! And is that the reason—its being ancestral—that Mr. Maverling wishes his son to go into it?"

"Is he going into it?" asked Munt.

"He's come up here to think about it."

"I should suppose it would be a very good thing," said Munt.

"What a very remarkable forest!" said Mrs. Pasmer, examining it on either side, and turning quite round. This gave her, from her place in the van of the straggling procession, a glimpse of Alice and Dan Maverling far in the rear.

"Don't you know," he was saying to the girl at the same moment, "it's like some of those Doré illustrations to the 'Inferno,' or the *Wandering Jew*."

"Oh yes. I was trying to think what

it was made me think I had seen it before," she answered. "It must be that. But how strange it is!" she exclaimed, "that sensation of having been there before—in some place before where you can't possibly have been."

"And do you feel it here?" he asked, as vividly interested as if they two had been the first to notice the phenomenon which has been a psychical consolation to so many young observers.

"Yes," she cried.

"I hope I was with you," he said, with a sudden turn of levity, which did not displease her, for there seemed to be a tender earnestness lurking in it. "I couldn't bear to think of your being alone in such a howling wilderness."

"Oh, I was with a large picnic," she retorted, gayly. "You might have been among the rest. I didn't notice."

"Well, the next time, I wish you'd look closer. I don't like being left out." They were so far behind the rest that he devoted himself entirely to her, and they had grown more and more confidential. They came to a narrow foot-bridge over a deep gorge. The hand-rail had fallen away. He sprang forward and gave her his hand for the passage. "Who helped you over here?" he demanded. "Don't say I didn't."

"Perhaps it was you," she murmured, letting him keep the fingers to which he clung a moment after they had crossed the bridge. Then she took them away, and said: "But I can't be sure. There were so many others."

"Other fellows?" he demanded, placing himself before her on the narrow path, so that she could not get by. "Try to remember, Miss Pasmer. This is very important. It would break my heart if it was really some one else." She stole a glance at his face, but it was smiling, though his voice was so earnest. "I want to help you over all the bad places, and I don't want any one else to have a hand in it."

The voice and the face still belied each other, and between them the girl chose to feel herself trifled with by the artistic temperament. "If you'll please step out of the way, Mr. Maverling," she said, severely, "I shall not need anybody's help just here."

He instantly moved aside, and they were both silent, till she said, as she quickened her pace to overtake the oth-

ers in front, "I don't see how you can help liking nature in such a place as this."

"I can't—human nature," he said. It was mere folly, and an abstract folly at that; but the face that she held down and away from him flushed with sweet consciousness as she laughed.

On the cliff beetling above the bay, where she sat to look out over the sad Northern sea, lit with the fishing sail they had seen before, and the surge washed into the rocky coves far beneath them, he threw himself at her feet, and made her alone in the company that came and went and tried this view and that from the different points where the picnic hostess insisted they should enjoy it. She left the young couple to themselves, and Mrs. Pasmer seemed to have forgotten that she had bidden Alice to be a little more with her.

Alice had forgotten it too. She sat listening to Maverick's talk with a certain fascination, but not so much apparently because the meaning of the words pleased her as the sound of his voice, the motion of his lips in speaking, charmed her. At first he was serious and even melancholy, as if he were afraid he had offended her; but apparently he soon believed that he had been forgiven, and began to burlesque his own mood, but still with a deference and a watchful observance of her changes of feeling which was delicately flattering in its way. Now and then when she answered something it was not always to the purpose; he accused her of not hearing what he said, but she would have it that she did, and then he tried to test her by proofs and questions. It did not matter for anything that was spoken or done; speech and action of whatever sort were mere masks of their young joy in each other, so that when he said, after he had quoted some lines befitting the scene they looked out on, "Now was that from Tennyson or from Tupper?" and she answered, "Neither; it was from Shakespeare," they joined in the same happy laugh, and they laughed now and then without saying anything. Neither this nor that made them more glad or less; they were in a trance, vulnerable to nothing but the summons which must come to leave their dream behind, and issue into the waking world.

In hope or in experience such a moment has come to all, and it is so pretty to those who recognize it from the outside

that no one has the heart to hurry it away while it can be helped. The affair between Alice and Maverick had evidently her mother's sanction, and all the rest were eager to help it on. When the party had started to return, they called to them, and let them come behind together. At the carriages they had what Miss Anderson called a new deal, and Alice and Maverick found themselves together in the rear seat of the last.

The fog began to come in from the sea, and followed them through the woods. When they emerged upon the highway it wrapped them densely round, and formed a little world, cozy, intimate, where they two dwelt alone with these friends of theirs, each of whom they praised for delightful qualities. The horses beat along through the mist, in which there seemed no progress, and they lived in a blissful arrest of time. Miss Anderson called back from the front seat, "My ear buyns; you're talkin' about me."

"Which ear?" cried Maverick.

"Oh, the left, of couurse."

"Then it's merely habit, Julie. You ought to have heard the nice things we were saying about you," Alice called.

"I'd like to hear *all* the nice things you've been saying."

This seemed the last effect of subtle wit. Maverick broke out in his laugh, and Alice's laugh rang above it.

Mrs. Pasmer looked involuntarily round from the carriage ahead.

"They seem to be having a good time," said Mrs. Brinkley, at her side.

"Yes; I hope Alice isn't overdoing."

"I'm afraid you're dreadfully tired," said Maverick to the girl, in a low voice, as he lifted her from her place when they reached the hotel through the provisional darkness, and found that after all it was only dinner-time.

"Oh no. I feel as if the picnic were just beginning."

"Then you will come to-night?"

"I will see what mamma says."

"Shall I ask her?"

"Oh, perhaps not," said the girl, repressing his ardor, but not severely.

XVIII.

They were going to have some theatricals at one of the cottages, and the lady at whose house they were to be given

made haste to invite all the picnic party before it dispersed. Mrs. Pasmer accepted with a mental reservation, meaning to send an excuse later if she chose; and before she decided the point she kept her husband from going after dinner into the reading-room, where he spent nearly all his time over a paper and a cigar, or in sitting absolutely silent and unoccupied, and made him go to their own room with her.

"There is something that I must speak to you about," she said, closing the door, "and you must decide for yourself whether you wish to let it go any further."

"What go any further?" asked Mr. Pasmer, sitting down and putting his hand to the pocket that held his cigar case with the same series of motions.

"No, don't smoke," she said, staying his hand impatiently. "I want you to think."

"How can I think if I don't smoke?"

"Very well; smoke, then. Do you want this affair with young Maverick to go any farther?"

"Oh!" said Pasmer, "I thought you had been looking after that." He had in fact relegated that to the company of the great questions exterior to his personal comfort which she always decided.

"I have been looking after it, but now the time has come when you must, as a father, take some interest in it."

Pasmer's noble mask of a face, from the point of his full white beard to his fine forehead, crossed by his impressive black eyebrows, expressed all the dignified concern which a father ought to feel in such an affair; but what he was really feeling was a grave reluctance to have to intervene in any way. "What do you want me to say to him?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know that he's going to ask you anything. I don't know whether he's said anything to Alice yet," said Mrs. Pasmer, with some exasperation.

Her husband was silent, but his silence insinuated a degree of wonder that she should approach him prematurely on such a point.

"They have been thrown together all day, and there is no use to conceal from ourselves that they are very much taken with each other."

"I thought," Pasmer said, "that you said that from the beginning. Didn't you want them to be taken with each other?"

"That is what you are to decide."

Pasmer silently refused to assume the responsibility.

"Well?" demanded his wife, after waiting for him to speak.

"Well what?"

"What do you decide?"

"What is the use of deciding a thing when it is all over?"

"It isn't over at all. It can be broken off at any moment."

"Well, break it off, then, if you like."

Mrs. Pasmer resumed the responsibility with a sigh. She felt the burden, the penalty, of power, after having so long enjoyed its sweets, and she would willingly have abdicated the sovereignty which she had spent her whole married life in establishing. But there was no one to take it up. "No, I shall not break it off," she said, resentfully; "I shall let it go on." Then, seeing that her husband was not shaken by her threat from his long-confirmed subjection, she added: "It isn't an ideal affair, but I think it will be a very good thing for Alice. He is not what I expected, but he is thoroughly nice, and I should think his family was nice. I've been talking with Mr. Munt about them to-day, and he confirms all that Etta Saintsbury said. I don't think there can be any doubt of his intentions in coming here. He isn't a particularly artless young man, but he's been sufficiently frank about Alice since he's been here." Her husband smoked on. "His father seems to have taken up the business from the artistic side, and Mr. Maverick won't be expected to enter into the commercial part at once. If it wasn't for Alice, I don't believe he would think of the business for a moment; he would study law. Of course it's a little embarrassing to have her engaged at once before she's seen anything of society here, but perhaps it's all for the best, after all: the main thing is that she should be satisfied, and I can see that she's only too much so. Yes, she's very much taken with him; and I don't wonder. He is charming."

It was not the first time that Mrs. Pasmer had reasoned in this round; but the utterance of her thoughts seemed to throw a new light on them, and she took a courage from them that they did not always impart. She arrived at the final opinion expressed, with a throb of tenderness for the young fellow whom she believed eager to take her daughter from her, and now for the first time she experienced a desola-

tion in the prospect, as if it were an accomplished fact. She was morally a bundle of finesses, but at the bottom of her heart her daughter was all the world to her. She had made the girl her idol, and if, like some other heathen, she had not always used her idol with the greatest deference, if she had often expected the impossible from it, and made it pay for her disappointment, still she had never swerved from her worship of it. She suddenly asked herself, What if this young fellow, so charming and so good, should so wholly monopolize her child that she should no longer have any share in her? What if Alice, who had so long formed her first care and chief object in life, should contentedly lose herself in the love and care of another, and both should ignore her right to her? She answered herself with a pang that this might happen with any one Alice married, and that it would be no worse, at the worst, with Dan Maverick than with another, while her husband remained impartially silent. Always keeping within the lines to which his wife's supremacy had driven him, he felt safe there, and was not to be easily coaxed out of them.

Mrs. Pasmer rose and left him, with his perfect acquiescence, and went into her daughter's room. She found Alice there, with a pretty evening dress laid out on her bed. Mrs. Pasmer was very fond of that dress, and at the thought of Alice in it her spirits rose again.

"Oh, are you going, Alice?"

"Why yes," answered the girl. "Didn't you accept?"

"Why yes," Mrs. Pasmer admitted.

"But aren't you tired?"

"Oh, not in the least. I feel as fresh as I did this morning. Don't you want me to go?"

"Oh yes, certainly, I want you to go—if you think you'll enjoy it."

"Enjoy it? Why, why shouldn't I enjoy it, mamma? What are you thinking about? It's going to be the greatest kind of fun."

"But do you think you ought to look at everything simply as fun?" asked the mother, with unwonted didacticism.

"How everything? What are you thinking about, mamma?"

"Oh, nothing! I'm so glad you're going to wear that dress."

"Why, of course! It's my best. But what are you driving at, mamma?"

Mrs. Pasmer was really seeking in her daughter that comfort of a distinct volition which she had failed to find in her husband, and she wished to assure herself of it more and more, that she might share with some one the responsibility which he had refused any part in.

"Nothing. But I'm glad you wish so much to go." The girl dropped her hands and stared. "You must have enjoyed yourself to-day," she added, as if that were an explanation.

"Of course I enjoyed myself! But what has that to do with my wanting to go to-night?"

"Oh, nothing. But I hope, Alice, that there is one thing you have looked fully in the face."

"What thing?" faltered the girl, and now showed herself unable to confront it by dropping her eyes.

"Well, whatever you may have heard or seen, nobody else is in doubt about it. What do you suppose has brought Mr. Maverick here?"

"I don't know." The denial not only confessed that she did know, but it informed her mother that all was as yet tacit between the young people.

"Very well, then, I know," said Mrs. Pasmer; "and there is one thing that you must know before long, Alice."

"What?" she asked, faintly.

"Your own mind," said her mother.

"I don't ask you what it is, and I shall wait till you tell me. Of course I shouldn't have let him stay here if I had objected—"

"Oh, mamma!" murmured the girl, dyed with shame to have the facts so boldly touched, but not, probably, too deeply displeased.

"Yes. And I know that he would never have thought of going into that business if he had not expected—hoped—"

"Mamma!"

"And you ought to consider—"

"Oh, don't! don't! don't!" implored the girl.

"That's all," said her mother, turning from Alice, who had hidden her face in her hands, to inspect the costume on the bed. She lifted one piece of it after another, turned it over, looked at it, and laid it down. "You can never get such a dress in this country."

She went out of the room, as the girl dropped her face in the pillow. An hour later they met equipped for the evening's pleasure. To the keen glance that her

mother gave her, the daughter's eyes had the brightness of eyes that have been weeping, but they were also bright with that knowledge of her own mind which Mrs. Pasmer had desired for her. She met her mother's glance fearlessly, even proudly, and she carried her stylish costume with a splendor to which only occasions could stimulate her. They dramatized a perfect unconsciousness to each other, but Mrs. Pasmer was by no means satisfied with the decision which she had read in her daughter's looks. Somehow it did not relieve her of the responsibility, and it did not change the nature of the case. It was gratifying, of course, to see Alice the object of a passion so sincere and so ardent; so far the triumph was complete, and there was really nothing objectionable in the young man and his circumstances, though there was nothing very distinguished. But the affair was altogether different from anything that Mrs. Pasmer had imagined. She had supposed and intended that Alice should meet some one in Boston, and go through a course of society before reaching any decisive step. There was to be a whole season in which to look the ground carefully over, and the ground was to be all within certain well-ascertained and guarded precincts. But this that had happened was outside of these precincts, or at least on their mere outskirts. Class Day, of course, was all right; and she could not say that the summer colony at Campobello was not thoroughly and essentially Boston; and yet she felt that certain influences, certain sanctions, were absent. To tell the truth,

she would not have cared for the feelings of Maverick's family in regard to the matter, except as they might afterward concern Alice, and the time had not come when she could recognize their existence in regard to the affair; and yet she could have wished that even as it was his family could have seen and approved it from the start. It would have been more regular.

With Alice it was a simpler matter, and of course deeper. For her it was only a question of himself and herself; no one else existed to the sublime egotism of her love. She did not call it by that name; she did not permit it to assert itself by any name; it was a mere formless joy in her soul, a trustful and blissful expectance, which she now no more believed he could disappoint than that she could die within that hour. All the rebellion that she had sometimes felt at the anomalous attitude exacted of her sex in regard to such matters was gone. She no longer thought it strange that a girl should be expected to ignore the admiration of a young man till he explicitly declared it, and should then be fully possessed of all the materials of a decision on the most momentous question in life; for she knew that this state of ignorance could never really exist; she had known from the first moment that he had thought her beautiful. To-night she was radiant for him. Her eyes shone with the look in which they should meet and give themselves to each other before they spoke—the look in which they had met already, in which they had lived that whole day.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MEXICAN NOTES.

I.—FROM EL PASO TO THE CITY OF MEXICO.

BY CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

NATURALLY one shrinks a little from writing about Mexico after passing less than two months in its vast territory. There is so much to be said, and there are so many qualifications to be made to whatever is said. The longer one remains there the more he will hesitate to put down even his impressions, and I fancy that in time one would abandon altogether any attempt to write out his conflicting ideas: so much depends upon the temper, the temperament, the tastes, the endurance, of the traveller. One person returns from a

trip through Mexico in a glow of enthusiasm, interested in the people, enchanted with the climate, full of wonder over the scenery; another, weary with the long journeying, disgusted with the people, half starved by the unaccustomed diet, admits that the scenery is wonderful, though it is monotonous, and that the climate—except that the coast is too warm and the highland air is too rare—is delicious, and is heartily glad that the expedition has been made and is over.

To me Mexico is one of the most inter-