

Elevating Le Puy

BY LOUISE CLOSSER HALE

THE Illustrator demonstrated to us on the night before leaving Paris the curious construction of Le Puy. All of the quill tooth-picks in the Petit Lavenue Restaurant defined the valley, built carefully around a spot of claret on the table-cloth which stood for, the Grand Place, and with the aid of salt-cellar he marked the three sharp peaks which pierce the town (a sort of tit-tat-toe, three-in-a-row affair) and make this volcanic region so remarkable. The young lady who painted and the young man who photographed, our guests on this expedition, followed him with a polite appearance of breathlessness, and were quite agreed that there could be no other place like it for the brush, camera, or pencil.

"It will elevate you," the Illustrator told them. "You won't think of anything mean or earthy, or having to do with people. You will be painting the angels—and snap-shotting them," he added, not to hurt the feelings of the Photographer.

"The first puy, or mound," he continued, tapping the salt-cellar farthest from the claret stain, "is surmounted by a colossal statue of St. Joseph modern, but very extraordinary. This one in the middle has the old cathedral on its slope and is topped by another even more enormous statue, Notre Dame de France.

But my favorite"—affectionately indicating the toe of the tit-tat—"is this little church of St. Michael, right up on a needle's point."

With glistening eyes he regarded the humble table service, and the invited guests rose to his imaginative soaring.

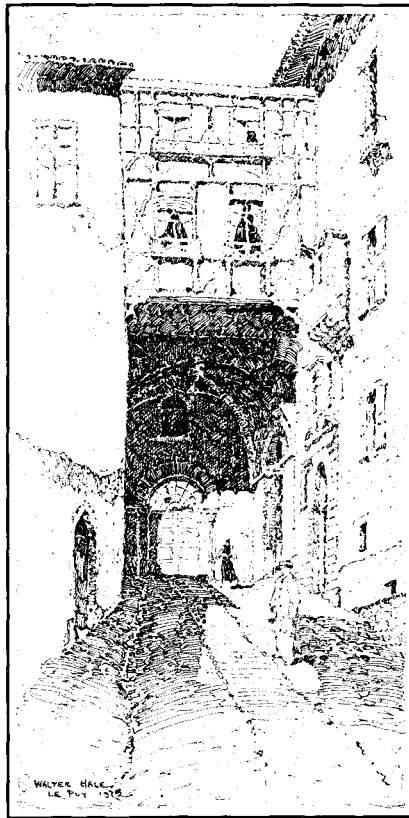
"Form, eh?" suggested the Photographer.

"Color, yes?" encouraged the Young Lady.

"And line," completed the Illustrator, solemnly.

Two days later, at the cross-roads beyond Brioude, the Illustrator skidded his motor-car skilfully alongside a coal-

wagon and asked which route brought us in with Le Puy on our left. Our driver was eager to present the town as picturesquely as possible, although it is difficult to explain why one feels this responsibility for localities simply because one has seen them before. Le Puy is some centuries older than our guide and ought to be able to speak for itself. Yet in spite of the wagoner's advice to stick to the broad highway, we took the poor mean one, intent upon giving a town which was quite indifferent to our appearance every opportunity of looking well from the first. Of course, the carter did not know that the souls of impractical artists seeking



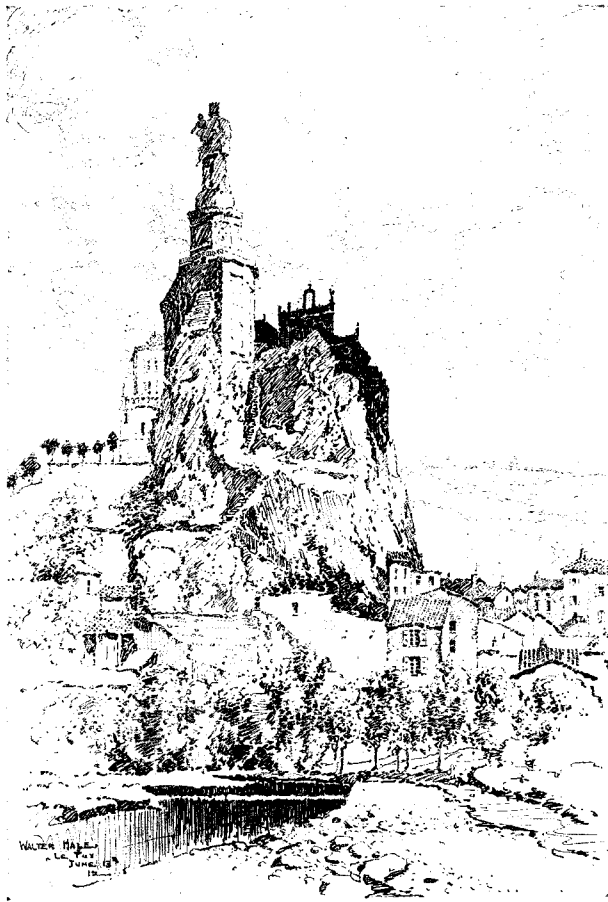
THE COURT BEHIND THE CATHEDRAL



Drawn by Walter Hale

LE PUY AND THE VALLEY SEEN FROM THE ROCHER CORNEILLE

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THE STATUE OF ST. JOSEPH

to be uplifted were peering out at him from under the canopy top, although he safely deduced that one of the members of the party was a photographer by the sudden leaping out of the young gentleman, camera in hand, intent upon taking him.

The Photographer was somewhat ostentatious in his method of descending from the car. Yet, in truth, it was not his fault, but rather that of his tripod, which drew all eyes in his direction. As the result of keeping his three-legged support at his feet, that it might be "handy," it generally sprang out as he did with at least one of the tripods wound around its master's legs. He was a young man of sunny disposition. He could find good in everything. As he lay with his charming head in the mud, and his feet lovingly en-

twined by his faithful retainer (which now dangled from the steps like a grand-daddy-long-legs) he would exclaim over the beauty of a lens that could stand such a test.

The Illustrator waited happily for him. He had found at last the kind of traveling companion that he had long sought: one who could pump up a tire without asking why he had ever left America, and who combined with mechanical knowledge an appreciation not only of beauty, but of the form of beauty that would look well as an illustration—and not be too hard to do. It was well known that my choice of composition demanded several hours on a damp rock in an ill-smelling alley.

But he grew less happy as the day waned and the rain continued, for Le Puy did not burst upon us suddenly, seen from a great height, with the sun going down behind its three salt-

cellars, as he had fondly planned. Instead we slid along a narrow, tortuous way, a way that no living thing had ever taken except cows and pigs (and they were still addicted to it), until, by some mysterious process, we arrived underneath the valley and began to climb up to it. We wished to please the Illustrator. We stretched our necks, first out from under the canopy, then up at a right angle as we sought the puy. Only swans can do this, and those who wish to be kind. The rain splashed down on our upturned faces, yet the fires of our enthusiasm were not quenched.

I shall always remember the café next to our hotel as a warm room—oh, beautifully warm!—well lighted, its sofa-lined walls occupied by the leisure class of the town, yet with ever a little table—until

it finally became our table—to be found for us. Madame sat in her lookout, marvelously knitting as she made change or handed out the sugar, which was as valued as the *casse* itself. The click of billiard-balls was in the air, the groaning of an old hunting-dog who had rheumatism, and the flapping down of the cards as some Frenchman gathered a trick unto himself.

Our depression engendered by the necessity of leaving the café and dressing for dinner continued when we found that the rooms apportioned to us gave upon the court and not the market-place, as we had hastily commanded. Nor was it the assurance of the landlord that the automobiles in his court-yard were respectable ones, never coming in late at night or going out early in the morning, that soothed us. It was in all probability the dinner, ending in a marvelous chocolate soufflé, which made Le Puy once more a place worthy of our best efforts. We speculated on the concocting of the dish until the cook came in to talk it over, and said it must not be stirred, at least not until after the chocolate goes in. Filled and happy, we dwelt upon the wisdom of the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs specializing upon this dish. We predicted a success for it like unto the omelette of Madame Poulard, who shares the honors of Mont St. Michael. Our first evening had passed agreeably without any stimulus of heights. We went to bed.

I need not tell you that from the first day the Illustrator made sketches of Le Puy and faithfully recorded bits of Romanesque architecture. The drawings were made in the rain, and when the sun peeped out occasionally the Illustrator would leave even the soufflé to put in the shadows. From the lowly streets which I took a perverse delight in frequenting, the Photographer could be detected pacing off the heights preparatory to taking a snap-shot.

Perhaps "snap" is too hasty

a word to describe his *modus operandi*. He was a believer in the correct distance between his camera and his subject, and as a woman has faith that a yard covers the length between her nose and her extended arm, so did he contend that his stride measured three feet. It was his only grief that the distance was never an even number of strides. His arithmetic was not entirely good, and I could discern him waving about on one leg while he endeavored to estimate the number of feet in eight and three-quarter strides. After this calculation was effected it was his custom to sit down and wait for the sun. The sun had been out during the preliminaries, but, losing all patience, it had gone indoors to rest.

As for the Young Lady who painted, in recording her subject in this city of



ENTRANCE TO THE CHAPEL OF ST. MICHAEL

curious elevations, the story comes to mind of the man who had saved up for many years that he might paint Taormina, but, arriving there, spent his days doing a still life of his briar pipe. Somewhat akin to this fashion, the Young Lady transferred to canvas the interior of the warm café. Madame in her high *caisse* was her loftiest mound, the green of the billiard-table her middle distance, and the inhabitants of the houses which the Illustrator was acquiring by pencil her foreground. She did not entirely neglect us, nor, for convivial reasons, did we neglect her, and her concern for the Photographer showed itself in a continual laying down of her palette and a rushing up the steep to see if he had "turned it." He gallantly accompanied her back to the café after this, admiring bits of architecture from

under the same umbrella, there to rest at the little table until we searched them out, and in this way I was more and more thrown with the Illustrator, for which he had not planned, but which he accepted as the fate that must overtake the married man who has to sit still for his living.

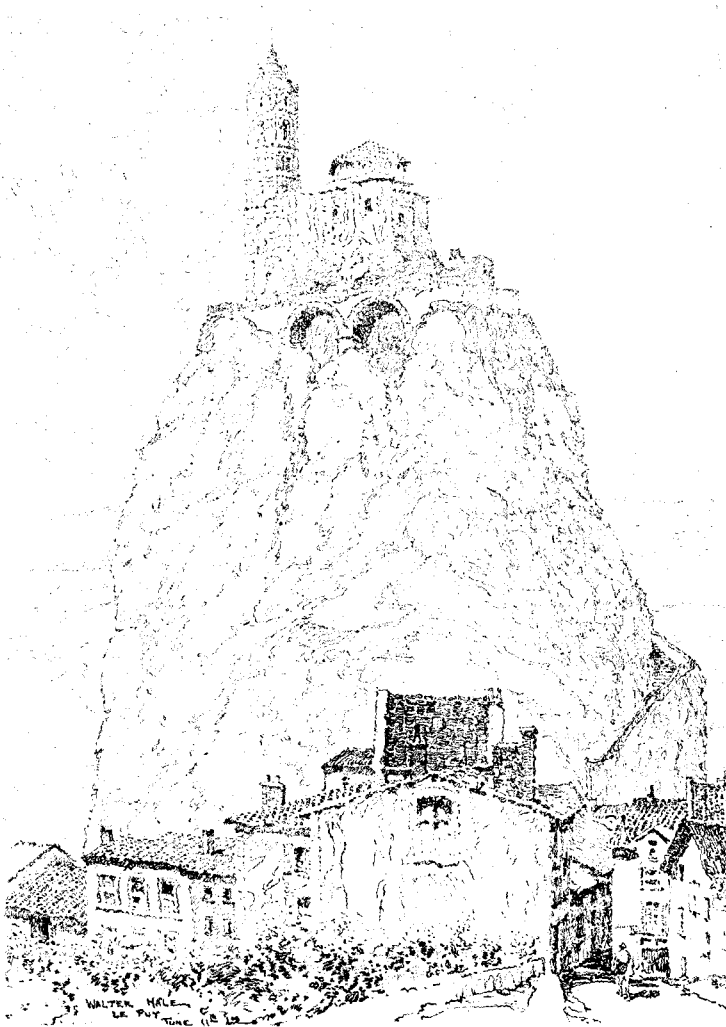
In districts where the stranger is little known, one who is attendant upon an artist has no sinecure, but manners were gentle in Le Puy. I needed but now and then to charge upon the small crowd gathered about him, and during the intervals could wander peacefully around improving myself. For those who are fond of shopping, sight-seeing in Le Puy has its appeal. In this locality ninety thousand women are engaged in making the Cluny lace which we find around our table-cloths and buffet-covers. The

cushions appear after the heavier work of the household is done, yet the results of their labors are ready for instant display as we pass their doors.

I went into the museum, which is part of the cathedral, leaving the Illustrator with nothing to worry him but a puppy leaping derisively at his sketch-book; and even in the museum, among moldering relics, my egress was barred by the lace-box of the guardian. We sat down on the tombstone of a saint, and bargained over Cluny collars, the price of one of these appearing to be the only means of escape. They were rather scant affairs, although not as meager as the museum, but the guardian said they would look very well in America. I don't know that she meant this as a delicate thrust, there was nothing else finely edged about her broad self; but even so, she spoke



STREET OF THE TABLES



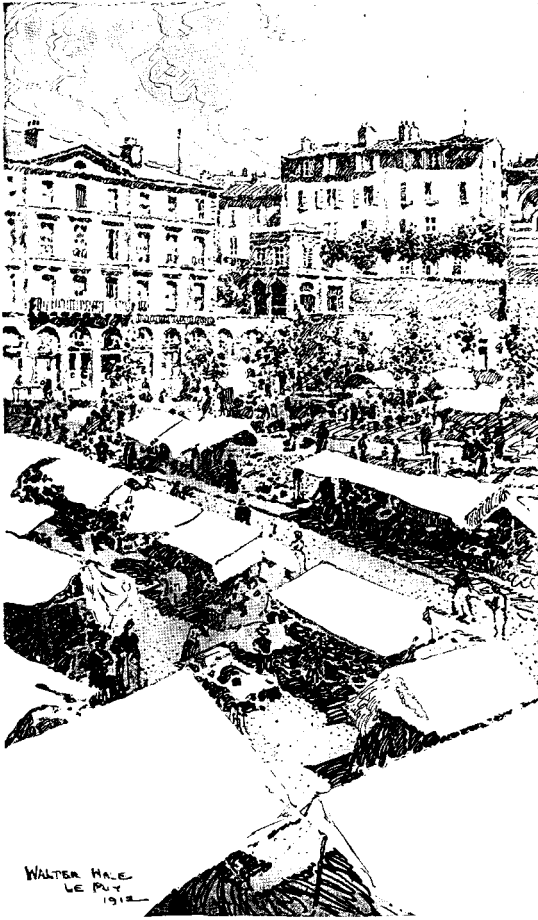
THE CHAPEL ON THE ROCK—ST. MICHAEL'S

the truth. I bought a collar, and wish now that I had bought more. When we get the wares of the country out of their original environment where we are nauseated by the quantity of them, they take on a new value.

When I returned to the steps of the cathedral, the sketch of the Street of the Tables was finished, and a neat young woman who had a fruit shop near by was holding the puppy in her arms and conversing rapidly with that utter indifference to the fact that she was barely understood which suggests that Latins talk for the

pure love of their language. The puppy was her son's, a good boy now in school. Last year he did not go to "Les Frères," and he often escorted strange ladies about the puy. For one week he was with some ladies from New York—"very strange ladies," which meant, after probings, that they were new to France.

"Would madame regard her lace?" she called gently after we had started toward our soufflé. I did not buy, but from that hour she always nodded to us as she sat in her shop door tossing the hobbins recklessly about on her lace cushion, yet



THE MARKET PLACE FROM THE HOTEL WINDOW

turning out yards of the symmetrical butterflies with which we are all familiar. And in this way, either by purchasing or refusing to purchase, our acquaintances grew many in Le Puy, and a mantle of fondness for the town wrapped us softly about, a fondness that gave us a spirit of elevation that yet had nothing to do with heights.

The Young Lady and I continued humble in our pursuits, though not without a feeling of growing enrichment. That afternoon, the sun coming out, the Illustrator splashed through the narrow ways to St. Joseph's gigantic statue, the Photographer climbed to the thousand-year-old church of St. Michael's (achieving six doilies and three table-cloths at the church door), and we

sought the washerwomen who knelt on either side the narrow, rushing stream and thrust their poor, gnarled hands into the icy water for eighteen cents a day. We could see the statue-crowned puy, built for the glory of God, from the little hollow where we sat, but I thought the cheery fortitude of these women to be quite as monumental.

A large, blowzy creature, in agreeable faded reds, who, with size to her advantage, felt she must be the one most prominent in the composition, called across the stream and offered to buy the picture if it was not too dear, but she veered from her proposition when she saw the blur of the impressionist's colors. Once she had been taken on a *carte postale*, she admonished, and on the postal card she was entirely there.

Although placing no value on her criticism, the Young Lady was greatly discouraged, which is the way of artists. More than that, we had not been successful in making ourselves understood, and long before the *apéritif* hour we were talking up to madame in her café lookout. The Young Lady plied her French industriously. "I've used a future anterior and a subjunctive," said she finally.

"They can understand if they want to."

Soon the Illustrator pushed in through the swinging doors in his usual state of dejection after making a sketch, and a minute later appeared the Photographer, his sunniness somewhat dimmed by the miserable behavior of his camera's shutter and the possibility that three times he had forgotten to "turn it." Or had he? He was most gloomy when he was not sure. Time and chopped ice softened their mood. The sun set behind rose-colored clouds, soldiers on the Place across the street paraded briskly to the flourish of trumpets. We grew sentimental over the salt-cellar once more, and chose the peak of Notre Dame for an excursion by moonlight.

We might have gone, but there was company for dinner. Their big gray English motor was blocking ours, which irritated the Illustrator. No, he did not want to take out his car, but what if he had? We eyed them with suspicion as they sat through dinner, talking intelligently; and when we gathered that they, too, were going to visit the puy by moonlight, we became flippant. That night we crossed the Place du Breuil and spent an evening before the moving pictures. They were excellent pictures, and the Young Lady said her only dread was the end. She went out during "Orange Picking in Sicily," and, employing the future tense carefully, asked if there will be new views every evening. We all felt a glow of satisfaction when we read the answer, by the light of the orange-picking, in her happy face.

She returned in time to witness an extra film thrown on the screen, as the handwriting on the white wall explained "out of compliment to the strangers." Every one turned and peered at us then, and we became very conscious, but even more happy. The first scene was that of "Main Street, New York City," which we recognized in a loud voice as the railway-station at White Plains. In this scene an actor whom two of us knew personally as a very cowardly young man crossed the tracks in a motor-car less than an instant before the Bankers' Express from Katonah, with the club car bumping along behind, went thundering past. In fact, the wooden gates which had been lowered across the road were snapped off by the impact of the automobile, and for a moment we held our breath for the safety of the actor whom we had never liked be-

fore. As the Photographer said, slightly confused by his ready sympathy, it would be very sad for an American, even an actor, to die in a strange country.

The midnight conviction of our body-guard that every one was kind to us in Le Puy stood the test of each morning after. At least every one was kind to us except the Society for the Exploitation of the City. I crossed the Place one morning with the friendly intention of explaining that our mission and theirs were identical, and I was received as churlishly as though I was depositing money in a New York savings-bank.

The walls were hung with a translation into French of a magazine article written and illustrated by our ablest American etcher, and booklets containing his announcement that Le Puy was the most



PORTE DE MONSIEUR—ALLÈGRE



THE STATUE-CROWNED PEAKS OF LE PUY

picturesque city in the world were to be had for the stealing. It would seem that there would never have been a Society for the Exploitation of the City had not this most excellent artist told them that they had something to exploit; yet the gentleman who was in attendance was not grateful nor keen for any further development of the picturesqueness. He cared not whether Le Puy was ever put into a book again; it had brought down a lot of notoriety upon them and given him a life position in the exploiting-office and gold braid on his clothes. He was very bitter. I longed to tell him that even street-car advertising in my own country is of little value unless new rhymes are continually invented, but upon reflection I found too many "future anteriors" confronting me, and withdrew.

That afternoon, as a preliminary run before our flight into the high Alps the next day, we burnished up the motor and took the road to Allègre. Beyond being as merry as its name, Allègre can be faithfully exploited as the filthiest town in France. The car leaped along its narrow, muddy street disdainfully, until it was forced into a ten-foot yard with a sheer declivity of two hundred feet as its back fence. The inhabitants, who met us as one man at the entrance to the village, gave doubtful assistance in piling debris behind the wheels to keep the car from slipping backward—broken glass bottles for choice—and further impeded us in the selection of suitable vantage-points for the making of pictures.

Allègre, to quote from the dictionary, is brisk, nimble, sprightly, cheerful, but no

one could tell us how this charming name had been achieved in the beginning of things, nor could the minds of any stretch far enough back to give the reason for "The Porte of Monsieur," the very able gate to the inner town. The old cobbler on whose chair the Illustrator was sitting brought his bowl of porridge to the door—for all Allègre was eating at the time, and standing as they ate—and allowed that a monsieur once lived in the rooms over the gate. Yet the dame who sold stockings where he was painting thought that the gentleman who once occupied the château on the top of the hill in *autre fois* made it his custom to pass under this fine arch. This was plausible, as he could not have reached the lower road without doing so. All that is left of his stronghold now is a grim bit of architecture which the brisk, nimble, sprightly, cheerful occupants of Allègre call the Gallows.

One could not say that the town lived in its past, but to judge by the maddening hordes of children, her future was promising. They had a brisk, nimble, sprightly, cheerful way of blocking the line of vision of my three artists, and a slow, shambling, limping, cheerless way when being pushed out of it. Yet those who sat upon the pencil of the Illustrator or draped themselves over the palette of the Young Lady betrayed a diablerie refreshing in its novelty.

"Aha, the roof of my father!" one would exclaim, as the Illustrator sketched in a building. The roof was unsuccessful, and the eraser descended upon it. "Oho, the roof has fallen in!" jeered the crowd.

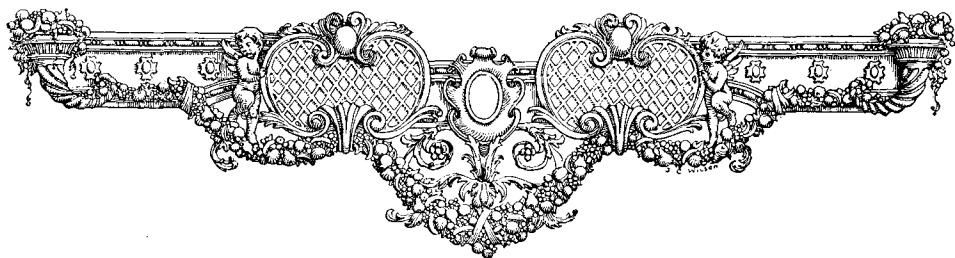
"Madame Grenier comes to pass in the street!" piped a high voice behind the

Young Lady, who was slapping in a figure, to those less fortunately placed. The Young Lady green-painted out the old crone. "Alas!" breathes the imp, "Madame Grenier is dead!"

We approached the town upon our return that day with the sun going down behind the three salt-cellars. From an eminence we watched the passing of the day. It was all there—rosy clouds, a rising moon, the mystery of purple shadows. There was the majesty of heights to lift us as high as the gods; the simplicity of the valley to keep us mortal. We found our moment of exaltation, and thanked the Illustrator, who said it was nothing at all.

In the midst of what might have been a speech from him had he been able to continue, the Young Lady demanded silence—silence from all but the Young Lady. The lights of the city were popping into place, blackening the night, yet outlining more plainly Le Puy as it was best known to us. "Look," she said, pointing tremulously. "At the foot of the peak of Notre Dame, at the left of the peak of St. Joseph—don't you see? It's our hotel and our café and our theater for the moving pictures!"

Here was our triumph over the Society for the Exploitation of the City. I will not exploit it; I will exploit the soufflé of the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, madame in her *caisse*, the rheumatism of the hunting-dog. I will speak of the lace-makers and the washerwomen who toil in the shadow of geological excrescences. I will extol the "movies." For the peaks serve only as does the background of a biograph, while before them, as on the screen, passes the film of life.



The Foreign Voyager

BY R. M. HALLET

FOR some years now Jonathan Weld had withdrawn from the north village, and made a home for his son's wife in that gray house by the town landing which had been so long without a tenant. It was a grim spot at best—inconceivable in winter. Sea-gulls and shell-drake cried over the sand-dunes that stood out beyond it, and a straggling sea-wall partly sheltered it from that terrible tide which crept in around the Hook, and at the turn, especially in mid-December, ran out with such black vehemence over those sandy flats that few men could pull against it. Old Jonathan, Old Vitriol, as they called him, from the shrewd tongue he wielded at town-meetings, could do it, paralyzed though he was, slightly, in the left wrist; but then Old Vitriol was an able seaman.

He was the only able seaman in the town, and a great man in consequence, a very great man. There were others among his townsmen who had the tradition in their blood; but they had never put to sea. They told tales, but these were the worn-out tales of their fathers, who had skippered the packets that plied twice a week between that town and Boston in the old days, before the rails had beaten the packets out of business. There was now no one in the flesh and blood to share with Old Vitriol the grand air, the rolling gait, and gusty breath which men who have gone foreign voyages have. His mere sea-silences had twice the weight of their sea-speech.

The young women of the town said he was an "unlikely" man; but secretly they wished that he was young, with all that he implied. The young men nowadays seemed to have no blood in them at all; they competed for the lone job of grocer's clerk, and sawed wood and chewed tobacco. Any one could shift along in that small village, where there was nothing to do and every one to do it. And so the young women were fond of Old Vitriol; but to show him that he was no more self-sufficient than any man under the original mother, they

would shout after him sometimes to inquire if he had called lately on Mrs. Harden.

There was the joint in his armor. On the left, as he went down the road from Simeon Chase's store, there was a white house, with a bright, brazen knocker on its black door, which looked slant-eyed at him as he passed. Many a year had passed since Old Vitriol had lifted his hand to that knocker, but its radiance molested him still. The house, I say, looked at him severely, as houses will; but, moreover, behind those blinds—and well he knew it—there sat a stern old lady, who would be sure to see him going by. This was Elizabeth Harden; this was the lady who, in a past which she would never let grow dim, had aspired to marry him.

Old Vitriol had to confess that he had held out hopes; but it was hard to punish him now for the way he had had with women in his youth. There had even been a time when he had hung in doubt; and then he had come home from one voyage bringing a vanity-box with the name of that Elizabeth Fosdick (that was then) laid in the wood with ivory and pearl; and inside an Oriental dagger with a curious black hilt and handle. A man should not make these presents needlessly; and Elizabeth Harden had since plunged that dagger in his heart, you might say, and twisted it about. For after that forces had arisen in him turning him another way; he had married elsewhere, and bred up a son, who had sorely disappointed him.

Jim Weld was all his life a shambling fellow, with neither the rugged frame nor the stern philosophy and iron will of that intrepid old adventurer his father. Old Vitriol showed him very little mercy while he lived at home. It harrowed him to see his son behind the counters of Jed Bragg, the grocer; he wanted to make an able seaman of him, a fellow who should go foreign voyages, as he had, and accept the land at last, in contempt, with his old age. But instead of all that, Jim Weld dawdled