

“When Half-Gods Go, The Gods Arrive”

By Julian Hawthorne

“What a beautiful girl!” said Mr. Ambrose Drayton to himself; “and how much she looks like—” He cut the comparison short, and turned his eyes seaward, pulling at his mustache meditatively the while.

“This American atmosphere, fresh and pure as it is in the nostrils, is heavy-laden with reminiscences,” his thoughts ran on. “Reminiscences, but always with differences, the chief difference being, no doubt, in myself. And no wonder. Nineteen years; yes, it’s positively nineteen years since I stood here and gazed out through yonder gap between the headlands. Nineteen years of foreign lands, foreign men and manners, the courts, the camps, the schools; adventure, business, and pleasure—if I may lightly use so mysterious a word. Nineteen and twenty are thirty-nine; in my case say sixty at least. Why, a girl like that lovely young thing walking away there with her light step and her innocent heart would take me to be sixty to a dead certainty. A rather well-preserved man of sixty—that’s how she’d describe me to the young fellow she’s given her heart to. Well, sixty or forty, what difference? When a man has passed the age at which he falls in love, he is the peer of Methuselah from that time forth. But what a fiery season that of love is while it lasts! Ay, and it burns something out of the soul that never grows again. And well that it should do so: a susceptible heart is a troublesome burden to lug round the world. Curious that I should be even thinking of such things: association, I suppose. Here it was that we met and here we parted. But what a different place it was then! A lovely cape, half bleak moorland and half shaggy wood, a few rocky headlands and a great many coots and gulls, and one solitary old farmhouse standing just where that spick-and-span summer hotel, with its balconies and cupolas, stands now. So it was nineteen years ago, and so it may be again, perhaps, nine hundred years hence; but meanwhile, what a pretty array of modern æsthetic cottages, and plank walks, and bridges, and bathing-houses, and pleasure-boats! And what an admirable concourse of well-dressed and pleasurably inclined men and women! After all, my countrymen are the finest-looking and most prosperous-appearing people on the globe. They have traveled a little faster than I have, and on a somewhat different track; but I would rather be among them than anywhere else. Yes, I won’t go back to London, nor yet to Paris, or Calcutta, or Cairo. I’ll buy a cottage here at Squittig Point, and live and die here and in New York. I wonder whether Mary is alive and mother of a dozen children, or—not!”

“Auntie,” said Miss Leithe to her relative, as they regained the veranda of their cottage after their morning stroll on the beach, “who was that gentleman who looked at us?”

“Hey?—who?” inquired the widow of the late Mr. Corwin, absently.

“The one in the thin gray suit and Panama hat; you must have seen him. A very distinguished-looking man, and yet very simple and pleasant; like some of those nice middle-aged men that you see in “Punch,” slenderly built, with handsome chin and eyes, and thick mustache and whiskers. Oh, auntie, why do you never notice things? I think a man between forty and fifty is ever so much nicer than when they’re younger. They know how to be courteous, and they’re not afraid of being natural. I mean this one looks as if he would. But he must be somebody remarkable in some way—don’t you think so? There’s something about him—something graceful and

gentle and refined and manly—that makes most other men seem common beside him. Who do you suppose he can be?”

“Who?—what have you been saying, my dear?” inquired Aunt Corwin, rousing herself from the perusal of a letter. “Here’s Sarah writes that Frank Redmond was to sail from Havre the 20th; so he won’t be here for a week or ten days yet.”

“Well, he might not have come at all,” said the girl, coloring slightly. “I’m sure I didn’t think he would, when he went away.”

“You are both of you a year older and wise;” said the widow, meditatively; “and you have learned, I hope, not to irritate a man needlessly. I never irritated Corwin in all my life. They don’t understand it.”

“Here comes Mr. Haymaker,” observed Miss Leithe. “I shall ask him.”

“Don’t ask him in,” said Mrs. Corwin, retiring; “he chatters like an organ-grinder.”

“Oh, good-morning, Miss Mary!” exclaimed Mr. Haymaker, as he mounted the steps of the veranda, with his hands extended and his customary effusion. “How charming you are looking after your bath and your walk and all! Did you ever see such a charming morning? I never was at a place I liked so much as Squittig Point; the new Newport, I call it—eh? the new Newport. So fashionable already, and only been going, as one might say, three or four years! Such charming people here! Oh, by-the-way, whom do you think I ran across just now? You wouldn’t know him, though—been abroad since before you were born, I should think. Most charming man I ever met, and awfully wealthy. Ran across him in Europe—Paris, I think it was—stop! or was it Vienna? Well, never mind. Drayton, that’s his name; ever hear of him? Ambrose Drayton. Made a great fortune in the tea-trade; or was it in the mines? I’ve forgotten. Well, no matter. Great traveler, too—Africa and the Corea, and all that sort of thing; and fought under Garibaldi, they say; and he had the charge of some diplomatic affair at Pekin once. The quietest, most gentlemanly fellow you ever saw. Oh, you must meet him. He’s come back to stay, and will probably spend the summer here. I’ll get him and introduce him. Oh, he’ll be charmed—we all shall.”

“What sort of a looking person is he?” Miss Leithe inquired.

“Oh, charming—just right! Trifle above medium height; rather lighter weight than I am, but graceful; grayish hair, heavy mustache, blue eyes; style of a retired English colonel, rather. You know what I mean—trifle reticent, but charming manners. Stop! there he goes now—see him? Just stopping to light a cigar—in a line with the light-house. Now he’s thrown away the match, and walking on again. That’s Ambrose Drayton. Introduce him on the sands this afternoon. How is your good aunt to-day? So sorry not to have seen her! Well, I must be off; awfully busy to-day. Good-by, my dear Miss Mary; see you this afternoon. Good-by. Oh, make my compliments to your good aunt, won’t you? Thanks. So charmed! *Au revoir.*”

“Has that fool gone?” demanded a voice from within.

“Yes, Auntie,” the young lady answered.

“Then come in to your dinner,” the voice rejoined, accompanied by the sound of a chair being drawn up to a table and sat down upon. Mary Leithe, after casting a glance after the retreating figure of Mr. Haymaker and another toward the light-house, passed slowly through the wire-net doors and disappeared.

Mr. Drayton had perforce engaged his accommodations at the hotel, all the cottages being either private property or rented, and was likewise constrained, therefore, to eat his dinner in public. But Mr. Drayton was not a hater of his species, nor a fearer of it; and though he had not acquired

precisely our American habits and customs, he was disposed to be as little strange to them as possible. Accordingly, when the gong sounded, he entered the large dining-room with great intrepidity. The arrangement of tables was not continuous, but many small tables, capable of accommodating from two to six, were dotted about everywhere. Mr. Drayton established himself at the smallest of them, situated in a part of the room whence he had a view not only of the room itself, but of the blue sea and yellow rocks on the other side. This preliminary feat of generalship accomplished, he took a folded dollar bill from his pocket and silently held it up in the air, the result being the speedy capture of a waiter and the introduction of dinner.

But at this juncture Mr. Haymaker came pitching into the room, as his nature was, and pinned himself to a standstill, as it were, with his eyeglass, in the central aisle of tables. Drayton at once gave himself up for lost, and therefore received Mr. Haymaker with kindness and serenity when, a minute or two later, he came plunging up, in his usual ecstasy of sputtering amiability, and seated himself in the chair at the other side of the table with an air as if everything were charming in the most charming of all possible worlds, and he himself the most charming person in it.

“My dear Drayton, though,” exclaimed Mr. Haymaker, in the interval between the soup and the bluefish, “there is some one here you must know—most charming girl you ever knew in your life, and has set her heart on knowing you. We were talking about you this morning—Miss Mary Leithe. Lovely name, too; pity ever to change it—he! he! he! Why, you must have seen her about here; has an old aunt, widow of Jim Corwin, who’s dead and gone these five years. You recognize her, of course?”

“Not as you describe he;” said Mr. Drayton, helping his friend to fish.

“Oh, the handsomest girl about here; tallish, wavy brown hair, soft brown eyes, the loveliest-shaped eyes in the world, my dear fellow; complexion like a Titian, figure slender yet, but promising. A way of giving you her hand that makes you wish she would take your heart,” pursued Mr. Haymaker, impetuously filling his mouth with bluefish, during the disposal of which he lost the thread of his harangue. Drayton, however, seemed disposed to recover it for him.

“Is this young lady from New England?” he inquired.

“New-Yorker by birth,” responded the ever-vivacious Haymaker; “father a Southern man; mother a Bostonian. Father died eight or nine years after marriage; mother survived him six years; girl left in care of old Mrs. Corwin—good old creature, but vague—very vague. Don’t fancy the marriage was a very fortunate one; a little friction, more or less. Leithe was rather a wild, unreliable sort of man; Mrs. Leithe a woman not easily influenced—immensely charming, though, and all that, but a trifle narrow and set. Well, you know, it was this way: Leithe was an immensely wealthy man when she married him; lost his money, struggled along, good deal of friction; Mrs. Leithe probably felt she had made a mistake, and that sort of thing. But Miss Mary here, very different style, looks like her mother, but softer; more in her, too. Very little money, poor girl, but charming. Oh! you must know her.”

“What did you say her mother’s maiden name was?”

“Maiden name? Let me see. Why—oh, no—oh, yes—Cleveland, Mary Cleveland.”

“Mary Cleveland, of Boston; married Hamilton Leithe, about nineteen years ago. I used to know the lady. And this is her daughter! And Mary Cleveland is dead!—Help yourself, Haymaker. I never take more than one course at this hour of the day.”

“But you must let me introduce you, you know,” mumbled Haymaker, through his succotash.

“I hardly know,” said Drayton, rubbing his mustache. “Pardon me if I leave you,” he added, looking at his watch. “It is later than I thought.”

Nothing more was seen of Drayton for the rest of that day. But the next morning, as Mary Leithe sat on the Boulder Rock, with a book on her lap, and her eyes on the bathers, and her thoughts elsewhere, she heard a light, leisurely tread behind her; and a gentlemanly, effective figure made its appearance, carrying a malacca walking-stick, and a small telescope in a leather case slung over the shoulder.

“Good-morning, Miss Leithe,” said this personage, in a quiet and pleasant voice. “I knew your mother before you were born, and I can not feel like a stranger toward her daughter. My name is Ambrose Drayton. You look something like your mother, I think.”

“I think I remember mamma’s having spoken of you,” said Mary Leithe, looking up a little shyly, but with a smile that was the most winning of her many winning manifestations. Her upper lip, short, but somewhat fuller than the lower one, was always alive with delicate movements; the corners of her mouth were blunt, the teeth small; and the smile was such as Psyche’s might have been when Cupid waked her with a kiss.

“It was here I first met your mother,” continued Drayton, taking his place beside her. “We often sat together on this very rock. I was a young fellow then, scarcely older than you, and very full of romance and enthusiasm. Your mother—” He paused a moment, looking at his companion with a grave smile in his eyes. “If I had been as dear to her as she was to me,” he went on, “you would have been our daughter.”

Mary looked out upon the bathers, and upon the azure bay, and into her own virgin heart. “Are you married, too?” she asked at length.

“I was cut out for an old bachelor, and I have been true to my destiny,” was his reply. “Besides, I’ve lived abroad till a month or two ago, and good Americans don’t marry foreign wives.”

“I should like to go abroad,” said Mary Leithe.

“It is the privilege of Americans,” said Drayton. “Other people are born abroad, and never know the delight of real travel. But, after all, America is best. The life of the world culminates here. We are the prow of the vessel; there may be more comfort amidships, but we are the first to touch the unknown seas. And the foremost men of all nations are foremost only in so far as they are at heart American; that is to say, America is, at present, even more an idea and a principle than it is a country. The nation has perhaps not yet risen to the height of its opportunities. So you have never crossed the Atlantic?”

“No; my father never wanted to go; and after he died, mamma could not.”

“Well, our American Emerson says, you know, that, as the good of travel respects only the mind, we need not depend for it on railways and steamboats.”

“It seems to me, if we never moved ourselves, our minds would never really move either.”

“Where would you most care to go?”

“To Rome, and Jerusalem, and Egypt, and London.”

“Why?”

“They seem like parts of my mind that I shall never know unless I visit them.”

“Is there no part of the world that answers to your heart?”

“Oh, the beautiful parts everywhere, I suppose.”

“I can well believe it,” said Drayton, but with so much simplicity and straightforwardness that Mary Leithe’s cheeks scarcely changed color. “And there is beauty enough here,” he added, after a pause.

“Yes; I have always liked this place,” said she, “though the cottages seem a pity.”

“You knew the old farm-house, then?”

“Oh, yes; I used to play in the farm-yard when I was a little girl. After my father died, mamma used to come here every year. And my aunt has a cottage here now. You haven’t met my aunt, Mr. Drayton?”

“I wished to know you first. But now I want to know he; and to become one of the family. There is no one left, I find, who belongs to me. What would you think of me for a bachelor uncle?”

“I would like it very much,” said Mary, with a smile.

“Then let us begin,” returned Drayton.

Several days passed away very pleasantly. Never was there a bachelor uncle so charming, as Haymaker would have said, as Drayton. The kind of life in the midst of which he found himself was altogether novel and delightful to him. In some aspects it was like enjoying for the first time a part of his existence which he should have enjoyed in youth, but had missed; and in many ways he doubtless enjoyed it more now than he would have done then, for he brought it to a maturity of experience which had taught him the inestimable value of simple things; a quiet nobility of character and clearness of knowledge that enabled him to perceive and follow the right course in small things as in great; a serene yet cordial temperament that rendered him the cheerfulest and most trustworthy of companions; a generous and masculine disposition, as able to direct as to comply; and years which could sympathize impartially with youth and age, and supply something which each lacked. He, meanwhile, sometimes seemed to himself to be walking in a dream. The region in which he was living, changed, yet so familiar, the thought of being once more, after so many years of homeless wandering, in his own land and among his own countrymen, and the companionship of Mary Leithe, like, yet so unlike, the Mary Cleveland he had known and loved, possessing in reality all the tenderness and lovely virginal sweetness that he had imagined in the other, with a warmth of heart that rejuvenated his own, and a depth and freshness of mind answering to the wisdom that he had drawn from experience, and rendering her, though in her different and feminine sphere, his equal—all these things made Drayton feel as if he would either awake and find them the phantasmagoria of a beautiful dream, or as if the past time were the dream, and this the reality. Certainly, in this ardent, penetrating light of the present, the past looked vaporous and dim, like a range of mountains scaled long ago and vanishing on the horizon.

And was this all? Doubtless it was, at first. It was natural that Drayton should regard with peculiar tenderness the daughter of the woman he had loved. She was an orphan, and poor: he was alone in the world, with no one dependent upon him, and with wealth which could find no better use than to afford this girl the opportunities and the enjoyments which she else must lack. His anticipations in returning to America had been somewhat cold and vague. It was his native land; but abstract patriotism is, after all, rather chilly diet for a human being to feed his heart upon. The unexpected apparition of Mary Leithe had provided just that vividness and particularity that were wanting. Insensibly Drayton bestowed upon her all the essence of the love of country which he had cherished untainted throughout his long exile. It was so much easier and simpler a thing to know and appreciate her than to do as much for the United States and their fifty million inhabitants, national, political, and social, that it is no wonder if Drayton, as a modest and sane gentleman, preferred to make the former the symbol of the latter—of all, at least, that was good and lovable therein. At the same time, so clear-headed a man could scarcely have failed to be aware that his affection for Mary Leithe was not actually dependent upon the fact of her being an emblem. Upon what, then, was it dependent? Upon her being the daughter of

Mary Cleveland? It was true that he had loved Mary Cleveland; but she had deliberately jilted him to marry a wealthier man, and was therefore connected with and responsible for the most painful as well as the most pleasurable episode of his early life. Mary Leithe bore some personal resemblance to her mother; but had she been as like her in character and disposition as she was in figure and feature, would Drayton, knowing what he knew, have felt drawn toward her? A man does not remain for twenty years under the influence of an unreasonable and mistaken passion. Drayton certainly had not, although his disappointment had kept him a bachelor all his life, and altered the whole course of his existence. But when we have once embarked upon a certain career, we continue in it long after the motive which started us has been forgotten. No; Drayton's regard for Mary Leithe must stand on its own basis, independent of all other considerations.

What, in the next place, was the nature of this regard? Was it merely avuncular, or something different? Drayton assured himself that it was the former. He was a man of the world, and had done with passions. The idea of his falling in love made him smile in a deprecatory manner. That the object of such love should be a girl eighteen years his junior rendered the suggestion yet more irrational. She was lustrous with lovable qualities, which he genially recognized and appreciated; nay, he might love her, but the love would be a quasi-paternal one, not the love that demands absolute possession and brooks no rivalry. His attitude was contemplative and beneficent, not selfish and exclusive. His greatest pleasure would be to see her married to some one worthy of her. Meantime he might devote himself to her freely and without fear.

And yet, once again, was he not the dupe of himself and of a convention? Was his the mood in which an uncle studies his niece, or even a father his daughter? How often during the day was she absent from his thoughts, or from his dreams at night? What else gave him so much happiness as to please her, and what would he not do to give her pleasure? Why was he dissatisfied and aimless when not in her presence? Why so full-orbed and complete when she was near? He was eighteen years the elder, but there was in her a fullness of nature, a balanced development, which went far toward annulling the discrepancy. Moreover, though she was young, he was not old, and surely he had the knowledge, the resources, and the will to make her life happy. There would be, he fancied, a certain poetical justice in such an issue. It would illustrate the slow, seemingly severe, but really tender wisdom of Providence. Out of the very ashes of his dead hopes would arise this gracious flower of promise. She would afford him scope for the employment of all those riches, moral and material, which life had brought him; she would be his reward for having lived honorably and purely for purity's and honor's sake. But why multiply reasons? There was justification enough; and true love knows nothing of justification.

He loved her, then; and now, did she love him? This was the real problem—the mystery of a maiden's heart, which all Solomon's wisdom and Bacon's logic fail to elucidate. Drayton did what he could. Once he came to her with the news that he must be absent from an excursion which they had planned, and he saw genuine disappointment darken her sweet face, and her slender figure seem to droop. This was well as far as it went, but beyond that it proved nothing. Another time he gave her a curious little shell which he had picked up while they were rambling together along the beach, and some time afterward he accidentally noticed that she was wearing it by a ribbon round her neck. This seemed better. Again, on a night when there was a social gathering at the hotel, he entered the room and sat apart at one of the windows, and as long as he remained there he felt that her gaze was upon him, and twice or thrice when he raised his eyes they were met by hers, and she smiled; and afterward, when he was speaking near her, he noticed that she disregarded what her companion of the moment was saying to her, and listened only to

him. Was not all this encouragement? Nevertheless, whenever, presuming upon this, he hazarded less ambiguous demonstrations, she seemed to shrink back and appear strange and troubled. This behavior perplexed him; he doubted the evidence that had given him hope; feared that he was a fool; that she divined his love, and pitied him, and would have him, if at all, only out of pity. Thereupon he took himself sternly to task, and resolved to give her up.

It was a transparent July afternoon, with white and gray clouds drifting across a clear blue sky, and a southwesterly breeze roughening the dark waves and showing their white shoulders. Mary Leithe and Drayton came slowly along the rocks, he assisting her to climb or descend the more rugged places, and occasionally pausing with her to watch the white canvas of a yacht shiver in the breeze as she went about, or to question whether yonder flash amid the waves, where the gulls were hovering and dipping, were a blue-fish breaking water. At length they reached a little nook in the seaward face, which, by often resorting to it, they had in a manner made their own. It was a small shelf in the rock, spacious enough for two to sit in at ease, with a back to lean against, and at one side a bit of level ledge which served as a stand or table. Before them was the sea, which, at high-water mark, rose to within three yards of their feet; while from the shoreward side they were concealed by the ascending wall of sandstone. Drayton had brought a cushion with him, which he arranged in Mary's seat; and when they had established themselves, he took a volume of Emerson's poems from his pocket and laid it on the rock beside him.

"Are you comfortable?" he asked.

"Yes; I wish it would be always like this—the weather, and the sun, and the time—so that we might stay here forever."

"Forever is the least useful word in human language," observed Drayton. "In the perspective of time, a few hours, or days, or years, seem alike inconsiderable."

"But it is not the same to our hearts, which live forever," she returned.

"The life of the heart is love," said Drayton.

"And that lasts forever," said Mary Leithe.

"True love lasts, but the object changes," was his reply.

"It seems to change sometimes," said she.

"But I think it is only our perception that is misled. We think we have found what we love; but afterward, perhaps, we find it was not in the person we supposed, but in some other. Then we love it in him; not because our heart has changed, but just because it has not."

"Has that been your experience?" Drayton asked, with a smile.

"Oh, I was speaking generally," she said, looking down.

"It may be the truth; but if so, it is a perilous thing to be loved."

"Perilous?"

"Why, yes. How can the lover be sure that he really is what his mistress takes him for? After all, a man has and is nothing in himself. His life, his love, his goodness, such as they are, flow into him from his Creator, in such measure as he is capable or desirous of receiving them. And he may receive more at one time than at another. How shall he know when he may lose the talismanic virtue that won her love—even supposing he ever possessed it?"

"I don't know how to argue," said Mary Leithe; "I can only feel when a thing is true or not—or when I think it is and say what I feel."

"Well, I am wise enough to trust the truth of your feeling before any argument."

This assertion somewhat disconcerted Mary Leithe, who never liked to be confronted with her own shadow, so to speak. However, she seemed resolved on this occasion to give fuller utterance

than usual to what was in her mind; so, after a pause, she continued, "It is not only how much we are capable of receiving from God, but the peculiar way in which each one of us shows what is in him, that makes the difference in people. It is not the talisman so much as the manner of using it that wins a girl's love. And she may think one manner good until she comes to know that another is better."

"And, later, that another is better still?"

"You trust my feeling less than you thought, you see," said Mary, blushing, and with a tremor of her lips.

"Perhaps I am afraid of trusting it too much," Drayton replied, fixing his eyes upon her. Then he went on, with a changed tone and manner: "This metaphysical discussion of ours reminds me of one of Emerson's poems, whose book, by-the-by, I brought with me. Have you ever read them?"

"Very few of them," said Mary; "I don't seem to belong to them."

"Not many people can eat them raw, I imagine," rejoined Drayton, laughing. "They must be masticated by the mind before they can nourish the heart, and some of them—However, the one I am thinking of is very beautiful, take it how you will. It is called, 'Give all to Love.' Do you know it!"

Mary shook her head.

"Then listen to it," said Drayton, and he read the poem to her. "What do you think of it?" he asked when he had ended.

"It is very short," said Mary, "and it is certainly beautiful; but I don't understand some parts of it, and I don't think I like some other parts."

"It is a true poem," returned Drayton; "it has a body and a soul; the body is beautiful, but the soul is more beautiful still; and where the body seems incomplete, the soul is most nearly perfect. Be loyal, it says, to the highest good you know; follow it through all difficulties and dangers; make it the core of your heart and the life of your soul; and yet, be free of it! For the hour may always be at hand when that good that you have lived for and lived in must be given up. And then—what says the poet?"

"Though thou loved her as thyself;
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dims the day,
Stealing grace from all alive,
Heartily know,
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive.'"

There was something ominous in Drayton's tone, quiet and pleasant though it sounded to the ear, and Mary could not speak; she knew that he would speak again, and that his words would bring the issue finally before her.

He shut the book and put it in his pocket. For some time he remained silent, gazing eastward across the waves, which came from afar to break against the rock at their feet. A small white pyramidal object stood up against the horizon verge, and upon this Drayton's attention appeared to be concentrated.

"If you should ever decide to come," he said at length, "and want the services of a courier who knows the ground well, I shall be at your disposal."

“Come where?” she said, falteringly.

“Eastward. To Europe.”

“You will go with me?”

“Hardly that. But I shall be there to receive you.”

“You are going back?”

“In a month, or thereabouts.”

“Oh, Mr. Drayton! Why?”

“Well, for several reasons. My coming here was an experiment. It might have succeeded, but it was made too late. I am too old for this young country. I love it, but I can be of no service to it. On the contrary, so far as I was anything, I should be in the way. It does not need me, and I have been an exile so long as to have lost my right to inflict myself upon it. Yet I am glad to have been here; the little time that I have been here has recompensed me for all the sorrows of my life, and I shall never forget an hour of it as long as I live.”

“Are you quite sure that your country does not want you—need you?”

“I should not like my assurance to be made more sure.”

“How can you know? Who has told you? Whom have you asked?”

“There are some questions which it is not wise to put; questions whose answers may seem ungracious to give, and are sad to hear.”

“But the answer might not seem so. And how can it be given until you ask it?”

Drayton turned and looked at her. His face was losing its resolute composure, and there was a glow in his eyes and in his cheeks that called up an answering warmth in her own.

“Do you know where my country is?” he demanded, almost sternly.

“It is where you are loved and wanted most, is it not?” she said, breathlessly.

“Do not deceive yourself—nor me!” exclaimed Drayton, putting out his hand toward her, and half rising from the rock. “There is only one thing more to say.”

A sea-gull flew close by them, and swept on, and in a moment was far away, and lost to sight. So in our lives does happiness come so near us as almost to brush our cheeks with its wings, and then pass on, and become as unattainable as the stars. As Mary Leithe was about to speak, a shadow cast from above fell across her face and figure. She seemed to feel a sort of chill from it, warm though the day was; and without moving her eyes from Drayton’s face to see whence the shadow came, her expression underwent a subtle and sudden change, losing the fervor of a moment before, and becoming relaxed and dismayed. But after a moment Drayton looked up, and immediately rose to his feet, exclaiming, “Frank Redmond!”

On the rock just above them stood a young man, dark of complexion, with eager eyes, and a figure athletic and strong. As Drayton spoke his name, his countenance assumed an expression half-way between pleased surprise and jealous suspicion. Meanwhile Mary Leithe had covered her face with her hands.

“I’m sure I’d no idea you were here, Mr. Drayton,” said the young man. “I was looking for Mary Leithe. Is that she?”

Mary uncovered her face, and rose to her feet languidly. She did not as yet look toward Redmond, but she said in a low voice, “How do you do, Frank? You—came so suddenly!”

“I didn’t stop to think—that I might interrupt you,” said he, drawing back a little and lifting his head.

Drayton had been observing the two intently, breathing constrainedly the while, and grasping a jutting point of rock with his hand as he stood. He now said, in a genial and matter-of-fact voice,

“Well, Master Frank, I shall have an account to settle with you when you and my niece have got through your first greetings.”

“Mary your niece!” cried Redmond, bewildered.

“My niece by courtesy; her mother was a dear friend of mine before Mary was born. And now it appears that she is the young lady, the dearest and loveliest ever heard of, about whom you used to rhapsodize to me in Dresden! Why didn’t you tell me her name? By Jove, you young rogue, I’ve a good mind to refuse my consent to the match! What if I had married her off to some other young fellow, and you been left in the lurch! However, luckily for you, I haven’t been able thus far to find any one who in my opinion would suit her better. Come down here and shake hands, Frank, and then I’ll leave you to make your excuses to Miss Leithe. And the next time you come back to her after a year’s absence, don’t frighten her heart into her mouth by springing out on her like a jack-in-the-box. Send a bunch of flowers or a signet-ring to tell her you are coming, or you may get a cooler reception than you’d like!”

“Ah! Ambrose Drayton,” he sighed to himself as he clambered down the rocks alone, and sauntered along the shore, “there is no fool like an old fool. Where were your eyes that you couldn’t have seen what was the matter? Her heart was fighting against itself all the time, poor child! And you, selfish brute, bringing to bear on her all your antiquated charms and fascinations—Heaven save the mark!—and bullying her into the belief that you could make her happy! Thank God, Ambrose Drayton, that your awakening did not come too late. A minute more would have made her and you miserable for life—and Redmond too, confound him! And yet they might have told me; one of them might have told me, surely. Even at my age it is hard to remember one’s own insignificance. And I did love her! God knows how I loved her! I hope he loves her as much; but how can he help it! And she—she won’t remember long! An old fellow who made believe he was her uncle, and made rather a fool of himself; went back to Europe, and never been heard of since. Ah, me!”

“Where did you get acquainted with Mr. Drayton, Frank?”

“At Dresden. It was during the vacation at Freiberg last winter, and I had come over to Dresden to have a good time. We stayed at the same hotel. We played a game of billiards together, and he chatted with me about America, and asked me about my mining studies at Freiberg; and I thought him about the best fellow I’d ever met. But I didn’t know then—I hadn’t any conception what a splendid fellow he really was. If ever I hear anybody talking of their ideal of a gentleman, I shall ask them if they ever met Ambrose Drayton.”

“What did he do?”

“Well, the story isn’t much to my credit; if it hadn’t been for him, you might never have heard of me again; and it will serve me right to confess the whole thing to you. It’s about a—woman.”

“What sort of a woman?”

“She called herself a countess; but there’s no telling what she really was. I only know she got me into a fearful scrape, and if it hadn’t been for Mr. Drayton—”

“Did you do anything wrong, Frank?”

“No; upon my honor as a gentleman! If I had, Mary, I wouldn’t be here now.”

Mary looked at him with a sad face. “Of course I believe you, Frank,” she said. “But I think I would rather not hear any more about it.”

“Well, I’ll only tell you what Mr. Drayton did. I told him all about it—how it began, and how it went on, and all; and how I was engaged to a girl in America—I didn’t tell him your name; and I wasn’t sure, then, whether you’d ever marry me, after all; because, you know, you had been

awfully angry with me before I went away, because I wanted to study in Europe instead of staying at home. But, you see, I've got my diploma, and that'll give me a better start than I ever should have had if I'd only studied here. However—what was I saying? Oh! so he said he would find out about the countess, and talk to her himself. And how he managed I don't know; and he gave me a tremendous hauling over the coals for having been such an idiot; but it seems that instead of being a poor injured, deceived creature, with a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, she was a regular adventuress—an old hand at it, and had got lots of money out of other fellows for fear she would make a row. But Mr. Drayton had an interview with her. I was there, and I never shall forget it if I live to a hundred. You never saw anybody so quiet, so courteous, so resolute, and so immitigably stern as he was. And yet he seemed to be stern only against the wrong she was trying to do, and to be feeling kindness and compassion for her all the time. She tried everything she knew, but it wasn't a bit of use, and at last she broke down and cried, and carried on like a child. Then Mr. Drayton took her out of the room, and I don't know what happened, but I've always suspected that he sent her off with money enough in her pocket to become an honest woman with if she chose to; but he never would admit it to me. He came back to me after a while, and told me to have nothing more to do with any woman, good or bad, except the woman I meant to marry, and I promised him I wouldn't, and I kept my promise. But we have him to thank for our happiness, Mary."

Tears came silently into Mary's eyes; she said nothing, but sat with her hands clasped around one knee, gazing seaward.

"You don't seem very happy, though," pursued Redmond, after a pause; "and you acted so oddly when I first found you and Mr. Drayton together—I almost thought—well, I didn't know what to think. You do love me, don't you?"

For a few moments Mary Leithe sat quite motionless, save for a slight tremor of the nerves that pervaded her whole body; and then, all at once, she melted into sobs. Redmond could not imagine what was the matter with her; but he put his arms round her, and after a little hesitation or resistance, the girl hid her face upon his shoulder, and wept for the secret that she would never tell.

But Mary Leithe's nature was not a stubborn one, and easily adapted itself to the influences with which she was most closely in contact. When she and Redmond presented themselves at Aunt Corwin's cottage that evening her tears were dried, and only a tender dimness of the eyes and a droop of her sweet mouth betrayed that she had shed any.

"Mr. Drayton wanted to be remembered to you, Mary," observed Aunt Corwin, shortly before going to bed. She had been floating colored sea-weeds on paper all the time since supper, and had scarcely spoken a dozen words.

"Has he gone?" Mary asked.

"Who? Oh, yes; he had a telegram, I believe. His trunks were to follow him. He said he would write. I liked that man. He was not like Mr. Haymaker; he was a gentleman. He took an interest in my collections, and gave me several nice specimens. Your mother was a fool not to have married him. I wish you could have married him yourself. But it was not to be expected that he would care for a child like you, even if your head were not turned by that Frank Redmond. How soon shall you let him marry you?"

"Whenever he likes," answered Mary Leithe, turning away.

As a matter of fact, they were married the following winter. A week before the ceremony a letter arrived for Mary from New York, addressed in a legal hand. It contained an intimation that, in accordance with the instructions of their client, Mr. Ambrose Drayton, the undersigned had

placed to her account the sum of fifty thousand dollars as a preliminary bequest, it being the intention of Mr. Drayton to make her his heir. There was an inclosure from Drayton himself, which Mary, after a moment's hesitation, placed in her lover's hand, and bade him break the seal.

It contained only a few lines, wishing happiness to the bride and bridegroom, and hoping they all might meet in Europe, should the wedding trip extend so far. "And as for you, my dear niece," continued the writer, "whenever you think of me remember that little poem of Emerson's that we read on the rocks the last time I saw you. The longer I live the more of truth do I find in it, especially in the last verse:

“ ‘Heartily know,
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive!’ ”

“What does that mean?” demanded Redmond, looking up from the letter.

“We can not know except by experience,” answered Mary Leithe.