

A couple of hours passed away before we returned to Winthrop's room. In the course of our walk I had sought a favorable opportunity to talk again with him in regard to Olive, but it seemed sacrilegious as well as heartless to sully a shrine into whose sacred precincts I had been an involuntary visitant. I would wait; in all rarely endowed persons, according to the poet, there are two soul-sides. There will be time enough, I reasoned to myself, to thwart this foolish infatuation; it will not culminate in a day.

Ah, purbling mortals! How confidently we reason, and how unctiously we flatter ourselves upon our wisdom.

At parting I said: "Come over after dinner, cousin, and we will go hunting. I will have everything arranged."

"No, I can not go to-day."

"Why not, if I may ask?"

"I have a professional engagement."

"Indeed? Well, considering what we have seen of the life of this hamlet, I think you will pardon me if I ask if you are painting for love or practice?"

"You may make your own inferences. I am painting her portrait."

"And were so employed before I came. The canvas was on the easel last evening, and your progress was interrupted by my inopportune arrival."

"Yes."

"May I look at it?"

"No." And as he saw my look of surprise, he added in a gentler tone: "Not now, perhaps to-morrow."

"Does she give you a sitting this afternoon?"

"She has promised to."

"Well, remember Paolo and Francesca, and stick to your brush."

The only opportunity I had yet had to study Olive, about whom I was still curious, was at meal times. This new phase of this love affair intensified my anxiety to learn more about her. I therefore waited till the dinner hour was nearly over. Two or three late boarders were at the tables when I entered, but they soon left. Olive came to wait upon me. I had already observed enough to convince me that she was both an ordinary and an extraordinary person. In the first place, she was wholly unlike any other woman I had ever met. Those of my readers who have read Hawthorne's "Marble Faun" will understand me when I say that Olive appeared to me like a female fawn. She seemed to be thrillingly alive, she struggled with an exuberance of animal spirits that made her beauty, which was truly of a rare quality, radiant, while her figure, with its splendid poise, was one that a sculptor might choose for a model of Diana. In brief, here were all the adjuncts of a soul, but the soul, if

present, was in a chrysalis state, as yet unconscious of the grand estate into which it had been born. This singular fancy came and went during my observations of Olive, much as the shadow of a flying cloud flits over one when he is rapt in some absorbing thought. I gave but little heed to it at the time, and would not tax the reader's credulity by mentioning it now, except that I deem a tolerably accurate description of her nature necessary to the correct understanding of what follows. That is my excuse for indulging in all these various descriptions, which are really but so many pleonasms, all saying in a different way—Olive is a wonderful creature.

I spent the entire afternoon rambling through the adjacent woods. I am not a hearty sportsman, but I like a long and lonely chase in the woods or on the prairie, and often carry a gun on my shoulder for no other reason than because of the immunity it procures one from the curiosity of persons one always meets when strolling in settled neighborhoods. A hunter can pass anywhere and at any time of day without attracting idle observation.

On retiring to my room after supper I found a note from Winthrop, saying he would call for me at seven. It lacked but five minutes of the hour. Presently I heard steps and my cousin appeared. I saw at a glance that something had happened in my absence, and then I remembered, what I had not before remarked, the absence of Olive from the dining room at supper time.

"Well," I said, as Winthrop entered the room.

"Are you ready?"

"Always ready for a walk with you, my dear cousin, night or day," and putting my arm in his we descended the creaking stairway together.

It was a magnificent night. The sun had set, but the whole firmament was flooded with the afterglow, for it was the fall succeeding the great eruption in the island of Krakatoa, the effect of which was observed throughout the northern hemisphere in the unusual height and lingering brilliancy of the sunset radiance, phenomena which were so marked as to attract widespread attention among scientists and observers of nature. On the evening in question, although perfectly cloudless, the whole western sky extending well nigh to the zenith was ablaze with a soft, pale red, shading to orange color at its upper edges.

We walked some moments in silence. What my companion's thoughts were, I could only surmise; my own weighed heavily upon me, as though some terror was impending which had been discerned by an occult spiritual sense before it was perceivable through the channels of reason. I longed to speak, but could not, and each additional moment of delay added new