

But to be cruel to *me*, to be fickle to *me*, to be deaf to *me*, to be blind to *me*! Would I change then? I might. As yet it does not know me. I pass through its streets, touching here a bit of old black wall, picking there an ivy leaf, and it knows me not. It is holy ground to me. It is the mistress whose hand alone I as yet dare to kiss. Some day I shall possess the whole, and I shall walk with the firm and buoyant tread of the accepted, delighted lover. Only to-day I am nobody. I am crowded out. Yet there are moments when the mere joy of being in England, of being in London, satisfies me. I have seen the sunbeam strike the glory along the green. I know it is an English sky above me, all change, all mutability. No steady cloudless sphere of blue but ever-varying glories of white piled cloud against the gray. Listen to this. I saw a primrose—the first I had ever seen—in the hedge. They said “Pick it.” But I did not. I, who had written there years ago,—

I never pulled a primrose, I,
But could I know that there may lie
E'en now some small or hidden seed,
Within, below, an English mead,
Waiting for sun and rain to make
A flower of it for my poor sake,
I then could wait till winds should tell,
For me there swayed or swung a bell,
Or reared a banner, peered a star,
Or curved a cup in woods afar.

I who had written that, I had found my first primrose and I could not pluck it. I found it fair be sure. I find all England fair. The shimmering mist and the tender rain, the red wall-flower and the ivy green, the singing birds and the shallow streams—all the country; the blackened churches, the grass-grown churchyards, the hum of streets the crowded omnibus, the gorgeous shops,—all the town. God! do I not love it, my England? Yet not my England yet. Till she proclaim it herself, I am not hers. I will make her mine. I will write as no man has ever written about her, for very love of her. I look out to-night from my narrow window and think how the moonlight falls on Tintern, on Glastonbury, on Furness. How it falls on the primrose I would not pluck. How it would like to fall on the tall blue-bells in the wood. I see the lights of Oxford St. the omnibuses rattle by, the people are going to see Irving, Wilson Barrett, Ellen Terry. What line, of mine, what bar, what thought or phrase will turn