

vessels of war, was, in fact (to the modest mind), the only drawback to the attractions of this marine abode, and even that might have been a mere misrepresentation of perspective. The whole picture reminded you of one of Claude's, at least in one respect, that every object that a landscape could suggest was to be found in it, besides those (such as the bathing machines and croquet ground) which had turned up since the elder master's time. Moreover, the tints in which the landscape was portrayed were of the most intense description; never were skies more blue, never was sea more green—indeed I may *so* green—as they were depicted in Salton Point. The British passenger is not, as a rule, impulsive (unless you abstract his umbrella), or else the attractions of scenery and climate as represented in this delightful picture were such as to have infallibly diverted him from going anywhere else, and taken him, out of hand, from the main line on to the branch to Salton-borough, whence a coach, with four flying steeds (said a supplementary advertisement) would convey him to the Point Hotel.

For George Gresham, journeying slowly by breaks and branches, as is the way with those who patronise cross lines, this picture, which began to meet his eye, late in the afternoon, at every station, had, of course, a special attraction. It was some sort of satisfaction to him, on his melancholy errand, to be thus assured that the locality at least to which he was bound was of a cheerful kind. It was nothing to him, of course, that the internal arrangements of the hotel were conducted in the continental fashion, or that 'the *table d'hôte* was second to none,' but these facts seemed somehow to relieve the gloom that in his imagination enveloped the roof beneath which his uncle had come to his end.

Gresham's first disenchantment took place at Saltonborough, where, instead of the Flying Coach, he found only a melancholy one-horse omnibus start-

ing for 'The Point,' and on which, save for a humpbacked driver with a keen hatchet face, he was the only passenger. Lightly laden as it was, and level as was the lonely road on which it travelled, its progress was very slow. On both sides of it extended a treeless waste, on one hand consisting of rank meadow land; on the other of marsh, which presently became a morass, and eventually an arm of the sea—apparently suffering from paralysis. It had hardly any tidal movement, and the very gulls that flew lazily across it seemed to partake of its stagnation. There were no vessels, save one huge collier lying on her side in the mud, like a sea monster in a fit; but several masts, or what looked like masts, stood up forlornly in the ooze and slime, as though, like human ne'er-do-wells, the ships to which they had once belonged had gradually 'gone under.'

After a few miles, the road itself, to avoid sharing a similar fate, proceeded along a causeway; but causeway or road, there was nothing on it except the one horse omnibus which appeared to be journeying with the last man to the end of the world.

'There don't seem many people about,' observed Gresham to the driver, after a long silence; 'I suppose the season has hardly begun yet.'

'The season,' answered the other moodily, and not even taking the trouble to turn his head to his companion; 'oh! yes, the season's begun fast enough; we've nothing to complain of about *that*.'

'I mean the visitors at the hotel,' continued Gresham; 'they don't appear to have come down yet.'

'Yes, they have; more on 'em than usual,' was the unexpected reply. 'Last week we had twice as many as this time last year; now we've got our usual quantity.'

'They don't seem to ride or drive much at all events,' remarked Gresham.