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When Writing Mention This Paper.

He nodded acknowledgment of her right, and read the imperfect verses through once more.

"Tell me about it," Mary said.

"If I can," he answered. "How much self-analysis do you expect of a fellow of nineteen? And it's hard to analyze a stage of your development when you are once past it—though it's called easy. You can't feel what you were like; you can only remember." He stopped to consider. "Yet, some things aren't just remembering. I was nineteen that year; I thought I was in love; I have never stopped thinking so; and yet"—he looked about the pleasant, quiet library, the heart of their home, and then at Mary.

"And yet this is home, you mean?" she said. "That's what takes my breath away. I never imagined any home but this, not in my unlikeliest dreamings. But you—for you there might have been another home if—if what?" she broke off to ask. "You haven't told me what happened Amy?"

"Amy?"

"Yes. I remember thinking, when I read the second Locksley Hall, that I'd sooner be Amy than Edith. Wouldn't you? He just called her a slighter ghost to flatter Edith. And now I'm Edith."

"It isn't like that a bit," he protested. "You don't understand—any more than I do," he added. "But it isn't like that—not like two girls of contrasted characters. It's more as if that were the beginning of—of me, I suppose. A fellow doesn't think much at nineteen; at least, I didn't. I never thought of her as a sweetheart, or a wife-to-be; I just thought of her. I didn't get past that. You know, if you opened your eyes for the very first time, and saw light, you wouldn't think of anything but that it was light."

"No, not at first. But after a while you'd have begun to see what light was for, and then you would have lighted your home with it. And it wouldn't have been this home. You see?"

"I see," he said, slowly. "It's rummy when you look at it that way. Hear the rain on the windows, and realize that this is the present we're in—this present when it seems to me there never was anyone but you from the beginning of time. And yet that other day, the day when I made those verses, is no more past than this minute I'm wasting in misleading talk."

"It isn't misleading," she said, and was silent for a little. "You haven't told me yet what happened Amy," she said, at last.

"She is dead, dear."

"Dead!"

"It was that summer we went out to the Coast—father and I. You've been through the Rocky Mountains?"

"Yes, but it's a long time ago."

"Did you try to describe them when you came back? Neither did I."

"But I didn't fall in love on the way through them," Mary said.

"Oh, that wasn't why. There's room in one's consciousness for two things at a time, when they are things as big as that. No; it was the mountains' very selves. When I thought of them afterwards, my mind used to crawl away off into a corner of my head and hope nobody would ask it any questions. Well, perhaps Amy had something to do with it—Amy and the mountains—they were all associated in my mind. Mountains can't be unhappy, you know—not meanly unhappy, at least, not discontented or sulky or spiteful. And Amy couldn't, either. The movement of her mind was bright and quick and clear, like the mountain streams."

"They were in the same Pullman with us, Amy and her relatives, and we were all more or less acquainted before our ways parted. Amy's father and mine used to smoke cigars and talk politics in the smoking room, and the rest of us admired the scenery. You know the way to see, when a particularly swagger bit of outdoors comes along on the other side of the car, is to drop on your knee in the aisle, and look out of the opposite window, while the people in that seat carefully hold their heads out of your way. Amy's mother had a good profile."

"And hadn't Amy?"

"Oh, I daresay she had. I never looked to see. But I do know the color of her hair, it was like yours, only lighter, and

of course she wore it in a long braid; she was only sixteen."

"Sixteen!"

"Yes. Oh, did you think it was a two-sided love affair—that she cared for me? Of course not. She didn't know anything about it; she never saw those verses. I had some sense, if I was only nineteen. But, oh, Mary, it was good, good, good for me, that first light! I never said a word to her, of course, though we got on fine talking of everything else, and even of herself and myself (except that one thing) and what we thought and felt, and all about the insides of our minds. You know youngsters' talk?" Mary nodded, but said nothing.

"At Glacier the train stopped for a little time, and we all got off and walked about. Do you remember the stream that falls over itself all the way down the mountain there? We looked at that a long time; Amy loved mountain streams, too. She tried to get a snap-shot of the glacier, but if that film had ever been developed it would have been a better picture of me than of the glacier, because I blundered into the foreground just as she was taking it. I wanted to ask her to send me a copy, I remember, but I hadn't the cheek. After she had taken the picture, we walked up and down and talked till the conductor called 'all aboard!' We had other talks, but that's the one I remember best."

"What did you say?"

"I don't know. That isn't the way you remember talks; you just remember they were good."

"I know that," Mary said, placidly.

"I just wanted to see if it was really good."

"There was another," he went on. "Just before we reached Vancouver, but I knew we were near the end of our journey, and I hadn't any wit in me, nor the right mood for talking. But I talked, because I knew there wouldn't be another chance; they were going down to California, after spending a day in Vancouver." He stopped, and looked at Mary. "It sounds flat, doesn't it? But you'd have understood if you'd been there."

"I understand," she said.

"We took the steamer to Victoria," he went on; "and a few days later I read in a newspaper the account of a train wreck—the train they left Seattle in. I knew their route, of course, because I had heard them talking of it. But I don't think father did, and I put the paper out of his sight; I didn't want to hear anyone speak of it. Do you know, I didn't even know their name? Dad may have known it, but he was talking politics to someone else by that time, and I wouldn't have asked him for the world. And I didn't need to; there were only three lives saved out of their Pullman, and they were grown people. So I knew, and I hid the paper."

"Poor boy!" Mary said in a half whisper. His attention was caught for a moment by her tone, but the tide of memory carried him on.

"I didn't know her Christian name, even; only the nickname they called her."

"They called her Roslein," Mary said, suddenly. "And not one of them could pronounce it, and her name wasn't Rose in the least, or anything like it. So when she grew old enough, she made them stop and call her Mary."

"Mary!"

"Yes. We didn't take that train, because papa had caught a heavy cold on the steamer, and we stayed in Seattle till he was better."

"Mary!"

"And you were that nice boy. I'll show you the picture of you and the glacier, if you'll wait a minute; it isn't a bit like either of you." She was rummaging in her desk, and presently came back to him with the photograph in her hand. "And that's you there, Jimmy. Now give me my verses."

He gave them, laughing, and bent eagerly to examine the picture.

"Roslein—Amy—Edith—Mary," he said, "we'll go again some day."

"Of course we will," she answered; "because that time I didn't know it was us."

The Absent-minded Professor—My tailor has put one button too many on my vest. I must cut it off. That's funny; now there's a buttonhole too many. What's the use of arithmetic?

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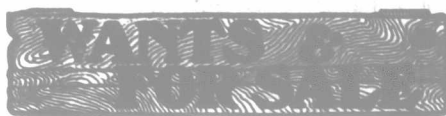
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