

his horse to the leader's side. "It's odds, though, that when you return this way you'll find me turned Papist. I'll swear your Excellency never saw in Flanders carved or painted saint so worthy of your prayers as yonder breathing one!"

The girl Molly had followed her parents, and now stood upon a little grassy knoll, surveying with wide brown eyes the gay troop before her. A light wind was blowing, and it wrapped her dress of tender, faded blue around her young limbs, and lifted her loosened hair, gilded by the sunshine into the likeness of an aureole. Her face was serious and wondering, but fair as a woodland flower. She had placed her hand upon the head of the child who was with her, clinging to her dress. The green knoll formed a pedestal; behind was the sky, as blue as that of Italy; the two figures might have been some painted altar-piece.

The sprightly company, which had taken for its motto "*Sic juvat transcendere montes*," looked and worshiped. There was a moment of silent devotion, broken by one of the gentlemen demanding if 't were not time for dinner; another remarked that they might go much farther and fare much worse, in respect of a cool, sweet spot in which to rest during the heat of the afternoon; and a third boldly proposed that they go no farther at all that day. Their leader settled the question by announcing that, Mr. Mason's suggestion finding favor in his sight, they would forthwith dismount, dine, drink red wine and white, and wear out the heat of the day in this sylvan paradise until four of the clock, when the trumpet should sound for the mount; also, that if the goodwife and her daughter would do them the honor to partake of their