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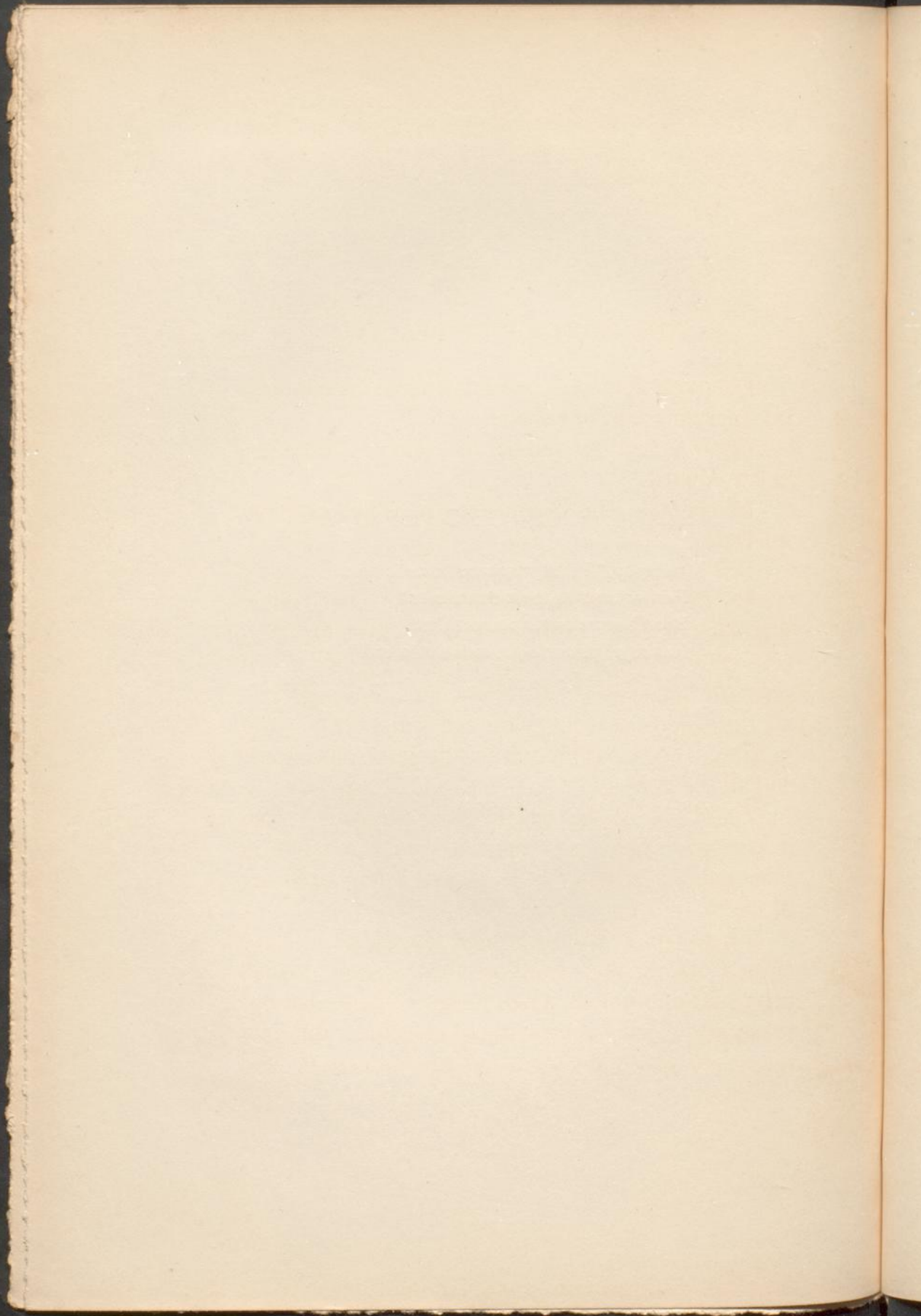
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22. THE FRUITAGE OF BEAUTY.

“Happy,” I said, “whose home is here !
Fair fortunes to the mountaineer !
Boon Nature to his poorest shed
Has royal pleasure-grounds outspread.”

R. W. EMERSON.



THE FRUITAGE OF BEAUTY.

The scene: A maple-shaded lawn looking out upon the encircling hills of Berkshire.

The time: Sunset and the few minutes just after, in late August.

The people: The Dominie ; The Wife ; Lisbeth ; Adelaide.

The Dominie. Well, the summer is over and gone. That rack of clouds in the west is decidedly October-ish. We have come to the harvest weeks ; and it seems no longer ago than yesterday that I was gathering the marsh-marigold by the brook and the hepatica in these woods. How quickly the season has gone, and all the glory of it !

The Wife. Ah, but has the glory of it gone ? Can it ever go ? Once seen must it not always live in your mind, a memory at least, and a harvested joy of life ?

The Dominie. That, of course, depends. If I have farmed well in the beauty of these scenes, I shall carry away from them a rich freight of harvested impressions. That I grant without question. But how many, do you suppose, of all the thousands who

have been living in the midst of these beauties, will take away any distinct impression, any clear, strong memories of the things they have seen?

Adelaide. You might carry your question farther and ask how many of these people have really looked at these things enough to have seen them at all. And for those who do not see at all, as well as for those who see only to forget, the glory and the beauty are indeed quite passed away.

The Wife. Is it as bad as that? You make the case quite hopeless for those who have but just begun to observe, who see but little, yet who are growing in perception of nature and her beauties. They may get but light impressions; but are these necessarily void? May they not be the beginnings of a deeper and more adequate appreciation of all this beauty?

Adelaide. I am afraid I have not much hope for those who are not endowed in the beginning with some love of the beautiful in nature. No eyes, no sight. No soul for beauty, no apprehension of it. Think of all the people who have lived here for years, yet who have no more sense of all this glorious scenery, this light, this colour, this sky-prospect, than the house-dog or the cows.

The Dominie. But do you think they have no capacity for beauty, or that they and their children might not be led to a larger enjoyment of it, if only they had a proper impulse and direction? I should be sorry to believe that there is anybody who is



utterly without this sense of the beautiful, at least in some germinal form and degree.

Adelaide. Well, I doubt whether it is worth one's while to try and develop what, in some folks at least, would prove to be very poor seed, in very bad soil. The time and trouble were better put in somewhere and somehow else.

Lisbeth. Yes, but suppose you had children whom you wanted to teach the love of all beauty, and this kind in particular, and found them slow and dull and indifferent, would you stop trying to impart to them what they lacked? Because they were born deficient would you let them grow up and die in the same lack? Would you not try to round them out on their weak sides?

Adelaide. I never would try to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Lisbeth. That is all right. But did you never hear of educated pigs; and were you never struck with the wonderful things that even a pig can be taught, if only his trainer has patience and takes the necessary time?

The Dominie. Let me stick a pin in there. I am quite sure that Lisbeth has used a most vital word. The time element has very much to do with the acquisition of this love of nature and its beauty. Such scenes as this must have time to soak into both sense and soul. An appreciative lover of nature is not made in a day nor a season. One must come again and again to such beauties in order to absorb

them, realise them, carry them away in memory. People who have the right to speak on the subject say that it is necessary to live for weeks in the presence of Mount Washington or the Matterhorn, before one can feel that he begins to understand them.

The Wife. What you say is borne out, too, by the lives of those who live long in the midst of such scenery. It must be that it makes its impression. Else why is it that when the mountaineer goes away from his hills he misses them, longs for them so, loves to go back to them. The same is true of the dwellers by the sea or on the plain. It must be that they unconsciously learn to love these grandeurs and these beauties. Long years spent among them serve to impress them deeply on the spirit. They enter into the life. I am not sure, either, that the people who live among these beauties are insensible to them. Why do we say that?

Lisbeth. Isn't it because they never say anything about them, in appreciation or in praise?

The Wife. That is just it. But impression and expression are very different things; and a good many of us, I suspect, feel a great deal more than we do or can tell. I do not care whether my children grow up with the power to talk finely about nature or not. But I do want them to feel finely its noble influences.

Adelaide. Yes, for nature is the great refiner; and the love of beauty in good hands ought to impart a grace and a delicacy to any life. We all need

it and ought to have it ; and of course I would be the first to admit that they who are altogether or largely deficient in aptness for this enjoyment and culture are great losers in the experience of life.

The Dominie. I am inclined to think that they lose more than mere enjoyment. I have grown to feel that the love of nature and its beauty and inner life have much to do with the enrichment of the religious life. Religion has been the gainer both from science and art, for these interpreters of nature have broadened our vision, lifted our ideals, and expanded all our conceptions of the universe and of its Creator.

Lisbeth. But people can be religious without having this love of nature and its beauties. Did the Puritans care much for nature ?

The Wife. And were not men devout and even nobly inspired in religious feeling, long before they knew much science or art ? What did David owe to the doctrine of evolution, or to Corot or Constable ?

The Dominie. Not too fast, please, either with questions or conclusions ! I only spoke of the enlargement of religious ideas through contact with nature. The Puritan would have been a more religious man if he had been more susceptible to these beauties of the outward. And as for David—

Adelaide. Now don't try to tell us that we have outgrown the Psalms, and that Spencer's *First Principles* is grander than the Nineteenth Psalm. I will not listen to any such nonsense.

The Dominie. Well, I do not ask you to. I am no such heretic toward the ancient landmarks as you try to force me to be. But suppose David were to come back here now, and, instead of the hills to which he lifted up his eyes, see Tacoma, and Sir Donald, and Jungfrau; and suppose instead of the shepherd's simple knowledge he were to hear the heavens declare the glory of God with the ear and understanding of Herschel. What might we not hear in the devout lyrics he would sing for us?

The Wife. I should hope they would not lose anything of the simplicity and childlikeness of the old ones. The world would be the poorer if they did.

The Dominie. True enough! The world has not lost and will not lose the primitive and germinal faiths which were born with it. But I devoutly believe that its culture and knowledge are all the time expanding these childlike ideals, and that the same spirit, with the maturity of the centuries added unto it, would strike a grander note.

Adelaide. Well, I am glad you think properly of the ancient harvests men reaped in this field of beauty.

The Dominie. Good! and I hope you realise that the soil grows richer with the deposit of the ages.

Lisbeth. Hark! I hear my baby cry.

The Wife. Well, it is too damp for us any longer. Let us go in.