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FICTION

THE VIEW FROM CASTLE ROCK

by Alice Munro

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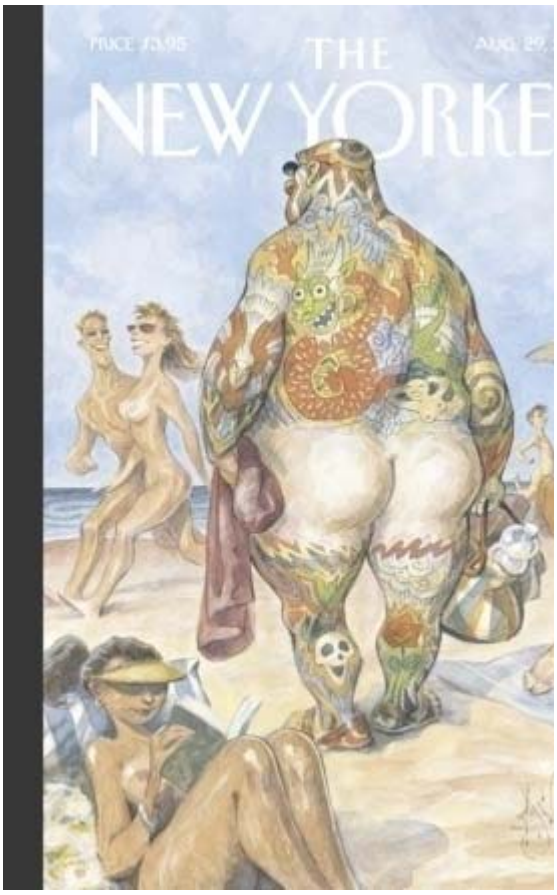

On a visit to Edinburgh with his father when he is nine or ten years old, Andrew finds himself climbing the damp, uneven stone steps of the Castle. His father is in front of him, some other men behind—it's a wonder how many friends his father has found, standing in cubbyholes where there are bottles set on planks, in the High Street—until at last they crawl out on a shelf of rock, from which the land falls steeply away. It has just stopped raining, the sun is shining on a silvery stretch of water far ahead of them, and beyond that is a pale green and grayish-blue land, a land as light as mist, sucked into the sky.

"America," his father tells them, and one of the men says that you would never have known it was so near.

"It is the effect of the height we are on," another says.

"There is where every man is sitting in the midst of his own properties and even the beggars is riding around in carriages," Andrew's father says, paying no attention to them. "So there you are, my lad"—he turns to Andrew—"and God grant that one day you will see it closer, and I will myself, if I live."

Andrew has an idea that there is something wrong with what his father is saying, but he is not well enough acquainted with geography to know that they are looking at Fife. He does not know if the men are mocking his father or if his father is playing a trick on them. Or if it is a trick at all.

Some years later, in the harbor of Leith, on the fourth of June, 1818, Andrew and his father—whom I must call Old James, because there is a James in every generation—and

Andrew's pregnant wife, Agnes, his brother Walter, his sister Mary, and also his son James, who is not yet two years old, set foot on board a ship for the first time in their lives.

Old James makes this fact known to the ship's officer who is checking off the names.

"The first time, serra, in all my long life. We are men of the Ettrick. It is a landlocked part of the world."

The officer says a word which is unintelligible to them but plain in meaning. *Move along.* He has run a line through their names. They move along or are pushed along, Young James riding on Mary's hip.

"What is this?" Old James says, regarding the crowd of people on deck. "Where are we to sleep? Where have all these rabble come from? Look at the faces on them—are they the blackamoors?"

"Black Highlanders, more like," Walter says. This is a joke, muttered so that his father cannot hear, Highlanders being one of the sorts the old man despises.

"There are too many people," his father continues. "The ship will sink."

"No," Walter says, speaking up now. "Ships do not often sink because of too many people. That's what the fellow was there for, to count the people."

Barely on board the vessel and this seventeen-year-old whelp has taken on knowing airs; he has taken to contradicting his father. Fatigue, astonishment, and the weight of the greatcoat he is wearing prevent Old James from cuffing him.

The business of life aboard ship has already been explained to the family. In fact, it has been explained by the old man himself. He was the one who knew all about provisions, accommodations, and the kinds of people you would find on board. All Scotsmen and all decent folk. No Highlanders, no Irish.

But now he cries out that it is like the swarm of bees in the carcass of the lion.

"An evil lot, an evil lot. Oh, that ever we left our native land."

"We have not left yet," Andrew says. "We are still looking at Leith. We would do best to go below and find ourselves a place."

More lamentation. The bunks are narrow planks with horsehair pallets that are both hard and prickly.

"Better than nothing," Andrew says.

"Oh, that ever I was enticed to bring us here, onto this floating sepulchre."

Will nobody shut him up? Agnes thinks. This is the way he will go on and on, like a preacher or a lunatic, when the fit takes him. She cannot abide it. She is in more agony herself than he is ever likely to know.

"Well, are we going to settle here or are we not?" she says.

Some people have hung up their plaids or shawls to make a half-private space for their families. She goes ahead and takes off her outer wrappings to do the same.

The child is turning somersaults in her belly. Her face is hot as a coal, her legs throb, and the swollen flesh in between them—the lips the child must soon part to get out—is a scalding sack of pain.

Her mother would have known what to do about that. She would have known which leaves to mash to make a soothing poultice. At the thought of her mother such misery overcomes her that she wants to kick somebody.

Why does Andrew not speak plainly to his father, reminding him of whose idea it was, who harangued and borrowed and begged to get them just where they are now? Andrew will not do it, Walter will only joke, and as for Mary she can hardly get her voice out of her throat in her father's presence.

Agnes comes from a large Hawick family of weavers, who work in the mills now but worked for generations at home. Working there they learned the art of cutting one another down to size, of squabbling and surviving in close quarters. She is still surprised by the rigid manners, the deference and silences in her husband's family. She thought from the beginning that they were a queer sort and she thinks so still. They are as poor as her own folk but they have such a great notion of themselves. And what have they got to back it up?

Mary has taken Young James back up to the deck. She could tell that he was frightened down there in the half-dark. He does not have to whimper or complain—she knows his feelings by the way he digs his little knees into her.

The sails are furled tight. "Look up there, look up there," Mary says, and points to a sailor who is busy high up in the rigging. The boy on her hip makes his sound for bird—"peep." "Sailor-peep, sailor-peep," she says. She and he communicate in a half-and-half language—half her teaching and half his invention. She believes that he is one of the cleverest children ever born into the world. Being the eldest of her family, and the only girl, she has tended to all her brothers, and been proud of them all at one time, but she has never known a child like this. Nobody else has any idea how original and independent he is. Men have no interest in children so young, and Agnes, his mother, has no patience with him.

"Talk like folk," Agnes tells him, and if he doesn't she gives him a clout. "What are you?" she says. "Are you a folk or an elfit?"

Mary fears Agnes's temper, but in a way she doesn't blame her. She thinks that women like Agnes—men's women, mother women—lead an appalling life. First with what the men do to them—even as good a man as Andrew—and then with what the children do, coming out. She will never forget the way her own mother lay in bed, out of her mind with a fever, not knowing anyone, till she died, three days after Walter was born. She screamed at the black pot hanging over the fire, thinking it was full of devils.

Mary—her brothers call her "poor Mary"—is under five feet tall and has a tight little face with a lump of protruding chin, and skin that is subject to fiery eruptions that take a long time to fade. When she is spoken to, her mouth twitches as if the words were all mixed

up with her spittle and her crooked teeth, and the response she manages is a dribble of speech so faint and scrambled that it is hard for people not to think her dim-witted. She has great difficulty looking anybody in the eyes—even the members of her own family. It is only when she gets the boy hitched onto the narrow shelf of her hip that she is capable of some coherent and decisive speech—and then it is mostly to him.

She hears the cow bawling before she can see it. Then she looks up and sees the brown beast dangling in the air, all caged in ropes and kicking and roaring frantically. It is held by a hook on a crane, which now hauls it out of sight. People around her are hooting and clapping their hands. A child cries out, wanting to know if the cow will be dropped into the sea. A man tells him no—she will go along with them on the ship.

"Will they milk her, then?"

"Aye. Keep still. They'll milk her," the man says reprovingly. And another man's voice climbs boisterously over his.

"They'll milk her till they take the hammer to her, and then ye'll have the blood pudding for yer dinner."

Now follow the hens, swung through the air in crates, all squawking and fluttering in their confinement and pecking one another when they can, so that some feathers escape and float down through the air. And after them a pig trussed up like the cow, squealing with a human note in its distress and shifting wildly in midair, so that howls of both delight and outrage rise below, depending on whether they come from those who are hit or those who see others hit.

James is laughing, too. He recognizes shite, and cries out his own word for it, which is "gruggin."

Someday he may remember this, Mary thinks. *I saw a cow and a pig fly through the air.* Then he may wonder if it was a dream. And nobody will be there—she certainly won't—to tell him that it was not, that it happened on this ship. It's possible that he will never see a ship like this again in all his waking life. She has no idea where they will go when they reach the other shore, but she imagines that it will be someplace inland, among the hills, someplace like the Ettrick.

She does not think that she will live long, wherever they go. She coughs in the summer as well as the winter, and when she coughs her chest aches. She suffers from sties, and cramps in the stomach, and her bleeding comes rarely but may last a month when it does. She hopes, though, that she will not die while James is still in need of her, which he will be for a while yet. She knows that the time will come when he will turn away, as her brothers did, when he will become ashamed of the connection with her. At least, that is what she tells herself will happen, but like anybody in love she cannot believe it.

On a trip to Peebles, Walter bought himself a notebook to write in, but for several days he has found too much to pay attention to and too little space or quiet on the deck even

to open it. Finally, after some investigating, he has discovered a favorable spot, near the cabins on the upper deck.

> We came on board on the 4th day of June and lay the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th in the Leith roads getting the ship to a place where we could set sail, which was on the 9th. We passed the corner of Fifeshire all well nothing occurring worth mentioning till this day the 13th in the morning when we were awakened by a cry, John o' Groat's House. We could see it plain and had a fine sail across the Pentland Firth having both wind and tide in our favour and it was in no way dangerous as we had heard tell. There was a child had died, the name of Ormiston and its body was thrown overboard sewed up in a piece of canvas with a large lump of coal at its feet.

He pauses in his writing to think of the weighted sack falling down through the water. Would the piece of coal do its job, would the sack fall straight down to the very bottom of the sea? Or would the current of the sea be strong enough to keep lifting it up and letting it fall, pushing it sideways, taking it as far as Greenland or south to the tropical waters full of rank weeds, the Sargasso Sea? Or might some ferocious fish come along and rip the sack and make a meal of the body before it had even left the upper waters and the region of light?

He pictures it now—the child being eaten. Not swallowed whole as in the case of Jonah but chewed into bits as he himself would chew a tasty chunk from a boiled sheep. But there is the matter of a soul. The soul leaves the body at the moment of death. But from which part of the body does it leave? The best guess seems to be that it emerges with the last breath, having been hidden somewhere in the chest, around the place of the heart and the lungs. Though Walter has heard a joke they used to tell about an old fellow in the Ettrick, to the effect that he was so dirty that when he died his soul came out his arsehole, and was heard to do so with a mighty explosion.

This is the sort of information that preachers might be expected to give you—not mentioning anything like an arsehole, of course, but explaining something of the proper location and exit. Yet they shy away from it. Also they cannot explain—at least, he has never heard one explain—how the souls maintain themselves outside of bodies until the Day of Judgment and how on that day each one finds and recognizes the body that is its own and reunites with it, though it be not so much as a skeleton at that time. *Though it be dust.* There must be some who have studied enough to know how all this is accomplished. But there are also some—he has learned this recently—who have studied and read and thought till they have come to the conclusion that there are no souls at all. No one cares to speak about these people, either, and indeed the thought of them is terrible. How can they live with the fear—indeed, the certainty—of Hell before them?

On the third day aboard ship Old James gets up and starts to walk around. After that, he stops and speaks to anybody who seems ready to listen. He tells his name, and says that he comes from Ettrick, from the Valley and Forest of Ettrick, where the old kings of Scotland used to hunt.

"And on the field at Flodden," he says, "after the battle of Flodden, they said you could walk up and down among the corpses and pick out the men from the Ettrick, because they were the tallest and the strongest and the finest-looking men on the ground. I have five sons

and they are all good strong lads, but only two of them are with me. One of my sons is in Nova Scotia. The last I heard of him he was in a place called Economy, but we have not had any word of him since and I do not know whether he is alive or dead. My eldest son went off to work in the Highlands, and the son that is next to the youngest took it into his head to go off there, too, and I will never see either of them again. Five sons and, by the mercy of God, all grew to be men, but it was not the Lord's will that I should keep them with me. A man's life is full of sorrow. I have a daughter as well, the oldest of them all, but she is nearly a dwarf. Her mother was chased by a ram when she was carrying her."

On the afternoon of the 14th a wind from the North and the ship began to shake as if every board that was in it would fly loose from every other. The buckets overflowed from the people that were sick and vomiting and there was the contents of them slipping all over the deck. All people were ordered below but many of them crumpled up against the rail and did not care if they were washed over. None of our family was sick however and now the wind has dropped and the sun has come out and those who did not care if they died in the filth a little while ago have got up and dragged themselves to be washed where the sailors are splashing buckets of water over the decks. The women are busy too washing and rinsing and wringing out all the foul clothing. It is the worst misery and the suddenest recovery I have seen ever in my life.

A young girl ten or twelve years old stands watching Walter write. She is wearing a fancy dress and bonnet and has light-brown curly hair. Not so much a pretty face as a pert one.

"Are you from one of the cabins?" she says.

Walter says, "No. I am not."

"I knew you were not. There are only four of them, and one is for my father and me and one is for the captain and one is for his mother, and she never comes out, and one is for the two ladies. You are not supposed to be on this part of the deck unless you are from one of the cabins."

"Well, I did not know that," Walter says, but does not bestir himself to move away.

"I have seen you before writing in your book."

"I haven't seen you."

"No. You were writing, so you didn't notice. I haven't told anybody about you," she adds carelessly, as if that were a matter of choice and she might well change her mind.

When she leaves, Walter adds a sentence.

And this night in the year 1818 we lost sight of Scotland.

The words seem majestic to him. He is filled with a sense of grandeur, solemnity, and personal importance.

16th was a very windy day with the wind coming out of the SW the sea was running very high and the ship got her gib-boom broken on account of the violence of the wind. And our sister Agnes was taken into the cabin.

"Sister," he has written, as if she were all the same to him as poor Mary, but that is not the case. Agnes is a tall well-built girl with thick dark hair and dark eyes. The flush on one of her cheeks slides into a splotch of pale brown as big as a handprint. It is a birthmark, which people say is a pity, because without it she would be handsome. Walter can hardly

bear looking at it, but this is not because it is ugly. It is because he longs to touch it, to stroke it with the tips of his fingers. It looks not like ordinary skin but like the velvet on a deer. His feelings about her are so troubling that he can speak to her only unpleasantly, if he speaks at all. And she pays him back with a good seasoning of contempt.

Agnes thinks that she is in the water and the waves are heaving her up and slamming her down. Every time they slap her down it is worse than the time before, and she sinks farther and deeper, the moment of relief passing before she can grab it, for the next wave is already gathering its power to hit her.

Then sometimes she knows that she is in a bed, a strange bed and strangely soft, but it is all the worse for that because when she sinks down there is no resistance, no hard place where the pain has to stop. People keep rushing back and forth in front of her. They are all seen sideways and all transparent, talking very fast so she can't make them out, and maliciously taking no heed of her. She sees Andrew in the midst of them, and two or three of his brothers. Some of the girls she knows are there, too—the friends she used to lark around with in Hawick. And they do not give a poor penny for the plight she is in now.

She never knew before that she had so many enemies. They are grinding her down and pretending they don't even know it. Their movement is grinding her to death.

Her mother bends over her and says in a drawling, cold, lackadaisical voice, "You are not trying, my girl. You must try harder." Her mother is all dressed up and talking fine, like some Edinburgh lady.

Evil stuff is poured into her mouth. She tries to spit it out, knowing it is poison.

I will just get up and get out of this, she thinks. She starts trying to pull herself loose from her body, as if it were a heap of rags on fire.

She hears a man's voice, giving some order. "Hold her," he says, and she is split and stretched wide open to the world and the fire.

"Ah—ah—anh," the man says, panting as if he had been running in a race.

Then a cow that is so heavy, bawling heavy with milk, rears up and sits down on Agnes's stomach.

"Now. Now," the man says, and he groans at the end of his strength as he tries to heave it off.

The fools. The fools, ever to have let it in.

She was not better till the 18th when she was delivered of a daughter. We having a surgeon on board nothing happened. Nothing occurred till the 22nd this was the roughest day we had till then experienced. Agnes was mending in an ordinary way till the 29th we saw a great shoal of porpoises and the 30th (yesterday) was a very rough sea with the wind blowing from the west we went rather backwards than forwards.

"In the Ettrick there is what they call the highest house in Scotland," Old James says, "and the house that my grandfather lived in was a higher one than that. The name of the place is Phauhope—they call it Phaup. My grandfather was Will O'Phaup, and fifty

years ago you would have heard of him if you came from any place south of the Forth and north of the Debatable Lands."

There are people who curse to see him coming, but others who are glad of any distraction. His sons hear his voice from far away, amid all the other commotion on the deck, and make tracks in the opposite direction.

For the first two or three days, Young James refused to be unfastened from Mary's hip. He was bold enough, but only if he could stay there. At night he slept in her cloak, curled up beside her, and she wakened aching along her left side, because she had lain stiffly all night so as not to disturb him. Then in the space of one morning he was down and running about and kicking at her if she tried to hoist him up.

Everything on the ship calls out for his attention. Even at night he tries to climb over her and run away in the dark. So she gets up aching not only from her position but from lack of sleep altogether. One night she drops off and the child gets loose, but most fortunately stumbles against his father's body in his bid for escape. Henceforth, Andrew insists that he be tied down every night. He howls, of course, and Andrew shakes him and cuffs him and then he sobs himself to sleep. Mary lies by him softly explaining that this is necessary so that he cannot fall off the ship into the ocean, but he regards her at these times as his enemy, and if she puts out a hand to stroke his face he tries to bite it with his baby teeth. Every night he goes to sleep in a rage, but in the morning when she unties him, still half asleep and full of his infant sweetness, he clings to her drowsily and she is suffused with love.

Then one day he is gone. She is in the line for wash water and she turns around and he is not beside her. She was just speaking a few words to the woman ahead of her, answering a question about Agnes and the infant, she had just told the woman its name—Isabel—and in that moment he got away.

Everything in an instant is overturned. The nature of the world is altered. She runs back and forth, crying out James's name. She runs up to strangers, to sailors who laugh at her as she begs them, "Have you seen a little boy? Have you seen a little boy this high, he has blue eyes?"

"I seen fifty or sixty of them like that in the last five minutes," a man says to her. A woman trying to be kind says that he will turn up, Mary should not worry herself, he will be playing with some of the other children. Some women even look about, as if they would help her search, but of course they cannot, they have their own responsibilities.

This is what Mary sees plainly in those moments of anguish: that the world which has turned into a horror for her is still the same ordinary world for all these other people and will remain so even if James has truly vanished, even if he has crawled through the ship's railings—she has noticed everywhere the places where this would be possible—and been swallowed by the ocean.

The most brutal and unthinkable of all events, to her, would seem to most others like a sad but not extraordinary misadventure. It would not be unthinkable to them.

Or to God. For in fact when God makes some rare and remarkable, beautiful human child is He not particularly tempted to take His creature back, as if the world did not deserve it?

Still, she is praying to Him all the time. At first she only called on the Lord's name. But as her search grows more specific and in some ways more bizarre—she is ducking under clotheslines that people have contrived for privacy, she thinks nothing of interrupting folk at any business, she flings up the lids of their boxes and roots in their bedclothes, not even hearing them when they curse her—her prayers also become more complicated and audacious. She tries to think of something to offer, something that could equal the value of James's being restored to her. But what does she have? Nothing of her own—not health or prospects or anybody's regard. There is no piece of luck or even a hope that she can offer to give up. What she has is James.

And how can she offer James for James?

This is what is knocking around in her head.

But what about her love of James? Her extreme and perhaps idolatrous, perhaps wicked love of another creature. She will give up that, she will give it up gladly, if only he isn't gone.

If only he can be found. If only he isn't dead.

She recalls all this an hour or two after somebody has noticed the boy peeping out from under a large empty bucket, listening to the hubbub. And she retracts her vow at once. Her understanding of God is shallow and unstable, and the truth is that, except in a time of terror such as she has just experienced, she does not really care. She has always felt that God or even the idea of Him was more distant from her than from other people. There is a stubborn indifference in her that nobody knows about. In fact, everybody may imagine that she clings secretly to religion because there is so little else available to her. They are quite wrong, and now that she has James back she gives no thanks but thinks what a fool she was and how she could not give up her love of him any more than stop her heart beating.

After that, Andrew insists that James be tied down not only by night but also by day, to the post of the bunk or to their clothesline on the deck. Andrew has trounced his son for the trick he played, but the look in James's eyes says that his tricks are not finished.

Agnes keeps asking for salt, till they begin to fear that she will fuss herself into a fever. The two women looking after her are cabin passengers, Edinburgh ladies, who took on the job out of charity.

"You be still now," they tell her. "You have no idea what a fortunate lassie you are that we had Mr. Suter on board."

They tell her that the baby was turned the wrong way inside her, and they were all afraid that Mr. Suter would have to cut her, and that might be the end of her. But he had managed to get it turned so that he could wrestle it out.

“I need salt for my milk,” says Agnes, who is not going to let them put her in her place with their reproaches and their Edinburgh speech. They are idiots, anyway. She has to explain to them how you must put a little salt in the baby’s first milk, just place a few grains on your finger and squeeze a drop or two of milk onto it and let the child swallow that before you put it to the breast. Without this precaution there is a good chance that it will grow up half-witted.

“Is she even a Christian?” one of them says to the other.

“I am as much as you,” Agnes says. But to her own surprise and shame she starts to weep aloud, and the baby howls along with her, out of sympathy or hunger. And still she refuses to feed it.

Mr. Suter comes in to see how she is. He asks what all the grief is about, and they tell him the trouble.

“A newborn baby to get salt in its stomach—where did she get the idea?”

He says, “Give her the salt.” And he stays to see her squeeze the milk on her salty finger, lay the finger to the infant’s lips, and follow it with her nipple.

He asks her what the reason is and she tells him.

“And does it work every time?”

She tells him—a little surprised that he is as stupid as they are, though gentler—that it works without fail.

“So where you come from they all have their wits about them? And are all the girls strong and good-looking like you?”

She says that she would not know about that.

Sometimes visiting young men, educated men from the town, used to hang around her and her friends, complimenting them and trying to work up a conversation, and she always thought that any girl who allowed it was a fool, even if the man was handsome. Mr. Suter is far from handsome—he is too thin, and his face is badly pocked, so that at first she took him for an old fellow. But he has a kind voice, and if he is teasing her a little there is no harm in it. No man would have the nature left to deal with a woman after looking at her spread wide, her raw parts open to the air.

“Are you sore?” he asks, and she believes there is a shadow on his damaged cheeks, a slight blush rising. She says that she is no worse than she has to be, and he nods, picks up her wrist, and bows over it, strongly pressing her pulse.

“Lively as a racehorse,” he says, with his hands still above her, as if he did not know where to put them next. Then he decides to push back her hair and press his fingers to her temples, as well as behind her ears.

She will recall this touch, this curious, gentle, tingling pressure, with an addled mixture of scorn and longing, for many years to come.

“Good,” he says. “No sign of a fever.”

He watches, for a moment, the child sucking.

"All's well with you now," he says, with a sigh. "You have a fine daughter, and she can say all her life that she was born at sea."

Andrew arrives later and stands at the foot of the bed. He has never looked on her in such a bed as this (a regular bed, even though bolted to the wall). He is red with shame in front of the ladies, who have brought in the basin to wash her.

"That's it, is it?" he says, with a nod—not a glance—at the bundle beside her.

She laughs in a vexed way and asks what did he think it was. That is all it takes to knock him off his unsteady perch, to puncture his pretense of being at ease. Now he stiffens up, even redder, doused with fire. It isn't just what she said. It is the whole scene—the smell of the infant and the milk and the blood, and most of all the basin, the cloths, the women standing by, with their proper looks that might seem to a man both admonishing and full of derision.

He looks as if he can't think of another word to say, so she has to tell him, with rough mercy, to get on his way, there's work to be done here.

Some of the girls used to say that when you finally gave in and lay down with a man—even granting he was not the man of your first choice—it gave you a helpless but calm and even sweet feeling. Agnes does not recall that she felt that with Andrew. All she felt was that he was an honest lad and the right one for her in her circumstances, and that it would never occur to him to run off and leave her.

Walter has continued to go to the same private place to write in his book and nobody has caught him there. Except the girl, of course. One day he arrives at the place and she is there before him, skipping with a red-tasselled rope. When she sees him she stops, out of breath. And no sooner does she catch her breath than she begins to cough, so that it is several minutes before she can speak. She sinks down against the pile of canvas that conceals the spot, flushed, her eyes full of bright tears from the coughing. He simply stands and watches her, alarmed at this fit but not knowing what to do.

"Do you want me to fetch one of the ladies?"

He is on speaking terms with the Edinburgh women now, on account of Agnes. They take a kind interest in the mother and baby and Mary and Young James, and think that the old father is comical. They are also amused by Andrew and Walter, who seem to them so bashful.

The coughing girl is shaking her curly head violently.

"I don't want them," she says, when she can gasp the words out. "I have never told anybody that you come here. So you mustn't tell anybody about me."

"Well, you are here by rights."

She shakes her head again and gestures for him to wait till she can speak more easily.

"I mean that you saw me skipping. My father hid my skipping rope but I found where he hid it."

“It isn’t the Sabbath,” Walter says reasonably. “So what is wrong with you skipping?”

“How do I know?” she says, regaining her saucy tone. “Perhaps he thinks I am too old for it. Will you swear not to tell anyone?”

What a queer, self-important little thing she is, Walter thinks. She speaks only of her father, so he thinks it likely that she has no brothers or sisters and—like himself—no mother. That condition has probably made her both spoiled and lonely.

The girl—her name is Nettie—becomes a frequent visitor when Walter tries to write in his book. She always says that she does not want to disturb him, but after keeping ostentatiously quiet for about five minutes she interrupts him with some question about his life or a bit of information about hers. It is true that she is motherless and an only child. She has never even been to school. She talks most about her pets—those dead and those living at her house in Edinburgh—and a woman named Miss Anderson, who used to travel with her and teach her. It seems that she was glad to see the back of this woman, and surely Miss Anderson, too, was glad to depart, after all the tricks that were played on her—the live frog in her boot and the woollen but lifelike mouse in her bed.

Nettie has been back and forth to America three times. Her father is a wine merchant whose business takes him to Montreal.

She wants to know all about how Walter and his people live. Her questions are, by country standards, quite impertinent. But Walter does not really mind. In his own family he has never been in a position that allowed him to instruct or teach or tease anybody younger than himself, and it gives him pleasure.

What does Walter’s family have for supper when they are at home? How do they sleep? Are animals kept in the house? Do the sheep have names, and what are the sheepdogs’ names, and can you make pets of them? What is the arrangement of the scholars in the schoolroom? Are the teachers cruel? What do some of his words mean that she does not understand, and do all the people where he is from talk like him?

“Oh, aye,” Walter says. “Even His Majesty the Duke does. The Duke of Buccleuch.”

She laughs and freely pounds her little fist on his shoulder.

“Now you are teasing me. I know it. I know that Dukes are not called Your Majesty. They are not.”

One day she arrives with paper and drawing pencils. She says that she has brought them to keep herself busy, so she will not be a nuisance to him. She offers to teach him to draw, if he wants to learn. But his attempts make her laugh, and he deliberately does worse and worse, till she laughs so hard she has one of her coughing fits. Then she says that she will do some drawings in the back of his notebook, so that he will have them to remember the voyage by. She draws the sails up above and a hen that has somehow escaped its cage and is trying to travel like a seabird over the water. She sketches from memory her dog that died. And she makes a picture of the icebergs she saw, higher than houses, on one of her past

voyages with her father. The setting sun shone through these icebergs and made them look—she says—like castles of gold. Rose-colored and gold.

Everything that she has drawn, including the icebergs, has a look that is both guileless and mocking, peculiarly expressive of herself.

"The other day I was telling you about that Will O'Phaup that was my grandfather, but there was more to him than I told you. I did not tell you that he was the last man in Scotland to speak to the fairies. It is certain that I have never heard of any other, in his time or later."

Walter is sitting around a corner, near some sailors who are mending the torn sails, but by the sounds that are made throughout the story he can guess that the out-of-sight audience is mostly women.

There is one tall well-dressed man—a cabin passenger, certainly—who has paused to listen within Walter's view. There is a figure close to this man's other side, and at one moment in the tale this figure peeps around to look at Walter and he sees that it is Nettie. She seems about to laugh, but she puts a finger to her lips as if warning herself—and Walter—to keep silent.

The man must, of course, be her father. The two of them stand there listening quietly till the tale is over. Then the man turns and speaks directly, in a familiar yet courteous way, to Walter. "Are you writing down what you can make of this?" the man asks, nodding at Walter's notebook.

Walter is alarmed, not knowing what to say. But Nettie looks at him with calming reassurance, then drops her eyes and waits beside her father as a demure little miss should.

"I am writing a journal of the voyage," Walter says stiffly.

"Now, that is interesting. That is an interesting fact, because I, too, am keeping a journal of this voyage. I wonder if we find the same things worth writing of."

"I only write what happens," Walter says, wanting to make clear that this is a job for him and not an idle pleasure. Still, he feels that some further justification is called for. "I am writing to keep track of every day so that at the end of the voyage I can send a letter home."

The man's voice is smoother and his manner gentler than any address Walter is used to. He wonders if he is being made sport of in some way. Or if Nettie's father is the sort of person who strikes up an acquaintance in the hope of getting hold of your money for some worthless investment.

Not that Walter's looks or dress would mark him out as a likely prospect.

"So you do not describe what you see? Only what, as you say, is happening?"

Walter is about to say no, and then yes. For he has just thought, if he writes that there is a rough wind, is that not describing? You do not know where you are with this kind of person.

"You are not writing about what we have just heard?"

“No.”

“It might be worth it. There are people who go around now prying into every part of Scotland and writing down whatever these old country folk have to say. They think that the old songs and stories are disappearing and that they are worth recording. I don’t know about that—it isn’t my business. But I would not be surprised if the people who have written it all down will find that it was worth their trouble—I mean to say, there will be money in it.”

Nettie speaks up unexpectedly.

“Oh, hush, Father. The old fellow is starting again.”

This is not what any daughter would say to her father in Walter’s experience, but the man seems ready to laugh, looking down at her fondly.

And indeed Old James’s voice has been going this little while, breaking in determinedly and reproachfully on those of his audience who might have thought it was time for their own conversations.

“And still another time, but in the long days in the summer, out on the hills late in the day but before it was well dark . . . ”

Walter has heard the stories his father is spouting, and others like them, all his life, but the odd thing is that until they came on board this ship he had never heard them from his father. The father he knew until a short while ago would, he is certain, have had no use for them.

“This is a terrible place we live in,” his father used to say. “The people is all full of nonsense and bad habits, and even our sheep’s wool is so coarse you cannot sell it. The roads are so bad a horse cannot go more than four miles an hour. And for plowing here they use the spade or the old Scotch plow, though there has been a better plow in other places for fifty years. ‘Oh, aye, aye,’ they say when you ask them. ‘Oh, aye, but it’s too steep hereabouts, the land is too heavy.’

“To be born in the Ettrick is to be born in a backward place,” he would say, “where the people is all believing in old stories and seeing ghosts, and I tell you it is a curse to be born in the Ettrick.”

And very likely that would lead him on to the subject of America, where all the blessings of modern invention were put to eager use and the people could never stop improving the world around them.

But hearken at him now.

“You must come up and talk to us on the deck above,” Nettie’s father says to Walter when Old James has finished his story. “I have business to think about and I am not much company for my daughter. She is forbidden to run around, because she is not quite recovered from the cold she had in the winter, but she is fond of sitting and talking.”

“I don’t believe it is the rule for me to go there,” Walter says, in some confusion.

"No, no, that is no matter. My girl is lonely. She likes to read and draw, but she likes company, too. She could show you how to draw, if you like. That would add to your journal."

So they sit out in the open and draw and write. Or she reads aloud to him from her favorite book, which is "The Scottish Chiefs." He already knows the story—who does not know about William Wallace?—but she reads smoothly and at just the proper speed and makes some things solemn and others terrifying and others comical, so that soon he is as much in thrall to the book as she is. Even though, as she says, she has read it twelve times already.

He understands a little better now why she has so many questions to ask him. He and his folk remind her of the people in her book, such people as there were out on the hills and in the valleys in the olden times. What would she think if she knew that the old fellow, the old tale-spinner spouting all over the boat and penning people up to listen as if they were sheep—what would she think if she knew that he was Walter's father?

She would be delighted, probably, more curious about Walter's family than ever. She would not look down on them, except in a way that she could not help or recognize.

We came on the fishing bank of Newfoundland on the 12th of July and on the 19th we saw land and it was a joyful sight to us. It was a part of Newfoundland. We sailed between Newfoundland and St. Paul's Island and having a fair wind both the 18th and the 19th we found ourselves in the river on the morning of the 20th and within sight of the mainland of North America. We were awakened at about 1 o'clock in the morning and I think every passenger was out of bed at 4 o'clock gazing at the land, it being wholly covered with wood and quite a new sight to us. It was a part of Nova Scotia and a beautiful hilly country.

This is the day of wonders. The land is covered with trees like a head with hair and behind the ship the sun rises, tipping the top trees with light. The sky is clear and shining as a china plate and the water playfully ruffled with wind. Every wisp of fog has gone and the air is full of the resinous smell of the trees. Seabirds are flashing above the sails all golden like creatures of Heaven, but the sailors fire a few shots to keep them from the rigging.

Mary holds Young James up so that he may always remember this first sight of the continent that will be his home. She tells him the name of this land—Nova Scotia.

"It means New Scotland," she says.

Agnes hears her. "Then why doesn't it say so?"

Mary says, "It's Latin, I think."

Agnes snorts with impatience. The baby was woken early by all the hubbub and celebration, and now she is miserable, wanting to be on the breast all the time, wailing whenever Agnes tries to take her off. Young James, observing all this closely, makes an attempt to get on the other breast, and Agnes bats him off so hard that he staggers.

"Suckie-laddie," Agnes calls him. He yelps a bit, then crawls around behind her and pinches the baby's toes.

Another whack.

"You're a rotten egg, you are," his mother says. "Somebody's been spoiling you till you think you're the Laird's arse."

Agnes's roused voice always makes Mary feel as if she were about to catch a blow herself.

Old James is sitting with them on the deck, but pays no attention to this domestic unrest.

"Will you come and look at the country, Father?" Mary says uncertainly. "You can have a better view from the rail."

"I can see it well enough," Old James says. Nothing in his voice suggests that the revelations around them are pleasing to him.

"Ettrick was covered with trees in the old days," he says. "The monks had it first and after that it was the Royal Forest. It was the King's forest. Beech trees, oak trees, rowan trees."

"As many trees as this?" Mary says, made bolder than usual by the novel splendors of the day.

"Better trees. Older. It was famous all over Scotland. The Royal Forest of Ettrick."

"And Nova Scotia is where our brother James is," Mary continues.

"He may be or he may not. It would be easy to die here and nobody know you were dead. Wild animals could have eaten him."

Mary wonders how her father can talk in this way, about how wild animals could have eaten his own son. Is that how the sorrows of the years take hold of you—turning your heart of flesh to a heart of stone, as it says in the old song? And if it is so, how carelessly and disdainfully might he talk about her, who never meant to him a fraction of what the boys did?

Somebody has brought a fiddle onto the deck and is tuning up to play. The people who have been hanging on to the rail and pointing out to one another what they can all see on their own—likewise repeating the name that by now everyone knows, Nova Scotia—are distracted by these sounds and begin to call for dancing. Dancing, at seven o'clock in the morning.

Andrew comes up from below, bearing their supply of water. He stands and watches for a little, then surprises Mary by asking her to dance.

"Who will look after the boy?" Agnes says immediately. "I am not going to get up and chase him." She is fond of dancing, but is prevented now not only by the nursing baby but by the soreness of the parts of her body that were so battered in the birth.

Mary is already refusing, saying she cannot go, but Andrew says, "We will put him on the tether."

"No. No," Mary says. "I've no need to dance." She believes that Andrew has taken pity on her, remembering how she used to be left on the sidelines in school games and at the dancing, though she can actually run and dance perfectly well. Andrew is the only one of her

brothers capable of such consideration, but she would almost rather he behaved like the others and left her ignored as she has always been. Pity galls her.

Young James begins to complain loudly, having recognized the word “tether.”

“You be still,” his father says. “Be still or I’ll clout you.”

Then Old James surprises them all by turning his attention to his grandson.

“You. Young lad. You sit by me.”

“Oh, he will not sit,” Mary says. “He will run off and then you cannot chase him, Father. I will stay.”

“He will sit,” Old James says.

“Well, settle it,” Agnes says to Mary. “Go or stay.”

Young James looks from one to the other, cautiously snuffling.

“Does he not know even the simplest word?” his grandfather says. “Sit. Lad. Here.”

Young James lowers himself, reluctantly, to the spot indicated.

“Now go,” Old James says to Mary. And all in confusion, on the verge of tears, she is led away.

People are dancing not just in the figure of the reel but quite outside of it, all over the deck. They are grabbing anyone at all and twirling around. They are even grabbing some of the sailors, if they can get hold of them. Men dance with women, men dance with men, women dance with women, children dance with one another or all alone and without any idea of the steps, getting in the way—but everybody is in everybody’s way already and it is no matter.

Mary has caught hands with Andrew and is swung around by him, then passed on to others, who bend to her and fling her undersized body about. She dances down at the level of the children, though she is less bold and carefree. In the thick of so many bodies she is helpless, she cannot pause—she has to stamp and wheel to the music or be knocked down.

“Now, you listen and I will tell you,” Old James says. “This old man, Will O’Phaup, my grandfather—he was my grandfather as I am yours—Will O’Phaup was sitting outside his house in the evening, resting himself. It was mild summer weather. All alone, he was. And there was three little lads hardly bigger than you are yourself, they came around the corner of Will’s house. They told him good evening. ‘Good evening to you, Will O’Phaup,’ they says. ‘Well, good evening to you, lads. What can I do for you?’ ‘Can you give us a bed for the night or a place to lie down?’ they says. And ‘Aye,’ he says. ‘Aye, I’m thinking three bits of lads like yourselves should not be so hard to find room for.’ And he goes into the house with them following and they says, ‘And by the bye, could you give us the key, too, the big silver key that you had of us?’ Well, Will looks around, and he looks for the key, till he thinks to himself, What key was that? For he knew he never had such a thing in his life. Big key or silver key, he never had it. ‘What key are you talking about?’ And turns himself around and they are not there. Goes out of the house, all around the house,

looks to the road. No trace of them. Looks to the hills. No trace. Then Will knew it. They was no lads at all. Ah, no. They was no lads at all."

James has not made any sound. At his back is the thick and noisy wall of dancers, to the side his mother, with the small clawing beast that bites into her body. And in front of him is the old man with his rumbling voice, insistent but remote, and his blast of bitter breath.

It is the child's first conscious encounter with someone as perfectly self-centered as he is.

He is barely able to focus his intelligence, to show himself not quite defeated. "Key," he says. "Key?"

Agnes, watching the dancing, catches sight of Andrew, red in the face and heavy on his feet, linked arm to arm with various jovial women. There is not one girl whose looks or dancing gives Agnes any worries. Andrew never gives her any worries, anyway. She sees Mary tossed around, with even a flush of color in her cheeks—though she is too shy, and too short, to look anybody in the face. She sees the nearly toothless witch of a woman who birthed a child a week after her own, dancing with her hollow-cheeked man. No sore parts for her. She must have dropped the child as slick as if it were a rat, then given it to one or the other of her weedy-looking daughters to mind.

She sees Mr. Suter, the surgeon, out of breath, pulling away from a woman who would grab him, ducking through the dance and coming to greet her.

She wishes he would not. Now he will see who her father-in-law is; he may have to listen to the old fool's gabble. He will get a look at their drab, and now not even clean, country clothes. He will see her for what she is.

"So here you are," he says. "Here you are with your treasure."

It is not a word that Agnes has ever heard used to refer to a child. It seems as if he is talking to her in the way he might talk to a person of his own acquaintance, some sort of a lady, not as a doctor talks to a patient. Such behavior embarrasses her and she does not know how to answer.

"Your baby is well?" he says, taking a more down-to-earth tack. He is still catching his breath from the dancing, and his face is covered with a fine sweat.

"Aye."

"And you yourself? You have your strength again?"

She shrugs very slightly, so as not to shake the child off the nipple.

"You have a fine color, anyway. That is a good sign."

He asks then if she will permit him to sit and talk to her for a few moments, and once more she is confused by his formality but tells him that he may do as he likes.

Her father-in-law gives the surgeon—and her as well—a despising glance, but Mr. Suter does not notice it, perhaps does not even realize that the old man and the fair-haired boy who sits straight-backed facing the old man have anything to do with her.

“What will you do in Canada West?” he asks.

It seems to her the silliest question. She shakes her head—what can she say? She will wash and sew and cook and almost certainly suckle more children. Where that will be does not much matter. It will be in a house, and not a fine one.

She knows now that this man likes her, and in what way. She remembers his fingers on her skin. What harm can happen, though, to a woman with a baby at her breast? She feels stirred to show him a bit of friendliness.

“What will you do?” she says.

He smiles and says that he supposes he will go on doing what he has been trained to do, and that the people in America—so he has heard—are in need of doctors and surgeons, just like other people in the world.

“But I do not intend to get walled up in some city. I’d like to get as far as the Mississippi River, at least. Everything beyond the Mississippi used to belong to France, you know, but now it belongs to America and it is wide open—anybody can go there, except that you may run into the Indians. I would not mind that, either. Where there is fighting with the Indians, there’ll be all the more need for a surgeon.”

She does not know anything about this Mississippi River but she knows that Mr. Suter does not look like a fighting man himself—he does not look as if he could stand up in a quarrel with the brawling lads of Hawick, let alone red Indians.

Two dancers swing so close to them as to put a wind into their faces. It is a young girl, a child, really, whose skirts fly out—and who should she be dancing with but Agnes’s brother-in-law Walter. Walter makes some sort of silly bow to Agnes and the surgeon and his father, and the girl pushes him and turns him around and he laughs at her. She is dressed like a young lady, with bows in her hair. Her face is lit up with enjoyment, her cheeks are glowing like lanterns, and she treats Walter with great familiarity, as if she had got hold of a large toy.

“That lad is your friend?” Mr. Suter says.

“No. He is my husband’s brother.”

The girl is laughing quite helplessly, as she and Walter—through her heedlessness—have almost knocked down another couple in the dance. She is not able to stand up for laughing, and Walter has to support her. Then it appears that she is not laughing but coughing. Walter is holding her against himself, half carrying her to the rail.

“There is one lass that will never have a child to her breast,” Mr. Suter says, his eyes flitting to the sucking child before resting again on the girl. “I doubt if she will live long enough to see much of America. Does she not have anyone to look after her? She should not have been allowed to dance.”

He stands up so that he can keep the girl in view as Walter holds her by the rail.

“There, she has stopped,” he says. “No hemorrhaging. At least not this time.”

Agnes can see that he takes a satisfaction in the verdict he has passed on this girl. And it occurs to her that this must be because of some condition of his own—that he must be thinking that he is not so bad off by comparison.

There is a cry at the rail, nothing to do with the girl and Walter. Another cry, and many people break off dancing and rush to look at the water. Mr. Suter rises and goes a few steps in that direction, following the crowd, then turns back.

"A whale," he says. "They are saying there is a whale to be seen off the side."

"You stay here!" Agnes shouts in an angry voice, and he turns to her in surprise. But he sees that her words are meant for Young James, who is on his feet.

"This is your lad, then?" Mr. Suter exclaims, as if he had made a remarkable discovery. "May I carry him over to have a look?"

And that is how Mary—happening to raise her face in the crush of passengers—beholds Young James, much amazed, being carried across the deck in the arms of a hurrying stranger, a pale and determined dark-haired man who is surely a foreigner. A child stealer, or child murderer, heading for the rail.

She gives so wild a shriek that anybody would think she was in the Devil's clutches herself, and people make way for her as they would for a mad dog.

"Stop, thief! Stop, thief!" she is crying. "Take the boy from him. Catch him. James! James! Jump down!"

She flings herself forward and grabs the child's ankles, yanking him so that he howls in fear and outrage. The man bearing him nearly topples over but doesn't give him up. He holds on and pushes at Mary with his foot.

"Take her arms," he shouts to those around them. He is short of breath. "She is in a fit."

Andrew has pushed his way in, through people who are still dancing and people who have stopped to watch the drama. He manages somehow to get hold of Mary and Young James and to make clear that one is his son and the other his sister and that it is not a question of fits.

All is shortly explained with courtesies and apologies from Mr. Suter.

"I had just stopped for a few minutes' talk with your wife, to ask her if she was well," the surgeon says. "I did not take time to bid her goodbye, so you must do it for me."

Mary remains unconvinced by the surgeon's story. Of course he would have to say to Agnes that he was taking the child to look at the whale. But that does not make it the truth. Whenever the picture of that devilish man carrying Young James flashes through her mind, and she feels in her chest the power of her own cry, she is astonished and happy. It is still her belief that she has saved him.

We were becalmed the 21st and 22nd but we had rather more wind the 23rd but in the afternoon were all alarmed by a squall of wind accompanied by thunder and lightning which was very terrible and we had one of our mainsails that had just been mended torn to rags again with the wind. The squall lasted about 8 or 10 minutes and the 24th we had a fair wind which sent us a good way up the River, where it be came more strait so that we saw land on both sides of the River. But we becalmed again till the 31st when we had a breeze only two hours.

Nettie's father's name is Mr. Carbert. Sometimes he sits and listens to Nettie read or talks to Walter. The day after the dancing, when many people are in a bad humor from exhaustion and some from drinking whiskey, and hardly anybody bothers to look at the shore, he seeks Walter out to talk to him.

"Nettie is so taken with you," he says, "that she has got the idea that you must come along with us to Montreal."

He gives an apologetic laugh, and Walter laughs, too.

"Then she must think that Montreal is in Canada West," Walter says.

"No. No. I am not making a joke. I looked out for you on purpose when she was not with me. You are a fine companion for her and it makes her happy to be with you. And I can see that you are an intelligent lad and a prudent one and one who would do well in my office."

"I am with my father and my brother," Walter says, so startled that his voice has a youthful yelp in it. "We are going to get land."

"Well, then. You are not the only son your father has. There may not be enough good land for all of you. And you may not always want to be a farmer."

Walter tells himself that this is true.

"My daughter, now, how old do you think she is?"

Walter cannot think. He shakes his head.

"She is fourteen, nearly fifteen," Nettie's father says. "You would not think so, would you? But it does not matter—that is not what I am talking about. Not about you and Nettie, anything in years to come. You understand that? There is no question of years to come. But I would like for you to come with us and let her be the child that she is and make her happy now with your company. Then I would naturally want to repay you, and there would also be work for you in the office, and if all went well you could count on advancement."

Both of them at this point notice that Nettie is coming toward them. She sticks out her tongue at Walter, so quickly that her father apparently does not notice.

"No more now. Think about it and pick your time to tell me," her father says. "But sooner rather than later would be best."

Walter does not take long to make up his mind. He knows enough to thank Mr. Carbert, but says that he has not thought of working in an office, or at any indoor job. He means to work with his family until they are set up with land to farm and then when they do not need his help so much he thinks of being a trader to the Indians, a sort of explorer. Or a miner for gold.

"As you will," Mr. Carbert says. They walk several steps together, side by side. "I must say I had thought you were rather more serious than that. Fortunately, I said nothing to Nettie."

But Nettie has not been fooled as to the subject of their talks together. She pesters her father until he has to let her know how things have gone and then she seeks out Walter.

“I will not talk to you anymore from now on,” she says, in a more grownup voice than he has ever heard from her. “It is not because I am angry but just because if I go on talking to you I will have to think all the time about how soon I’ll be saying goodbye to you. But if I stop now I will have already said goodbye, so it will all be over sooner.”

She spends the time that is left walking sedately with her father, in her finest clothes.

Walter feels sorry to see her—in these fine cloaks and bonnets she looks more of a child than ever, and her show of haughtiness is touching—but there is so much for him to pay attention to that he seldom thinks of her when she is out of sight.

Years will pass before she will reappear in his mind. But when she does he will find that she is a source of happiness, available to him till the day he dies. Sometimes he will even entertain himself with thoughts of what might have happened had he taken up the offer. He will imagine a radiant recovery, Nettie’s acquiring a tall and maidenly body, their life together. Such foolish thoughts as a man may have in secret.

Several boats from the land came alongside of us with fish, rum, live sheep, tobacco, etc. which they sold very high to the passengers. The 1st of August we had a slight breeze and on the morning of the 2nd we passed by the Isle of Orleans and about six in the morning we were in sight of Quebec in as good health I think as when we left Scotland. We are to sail for Montreal tomorrow in a steamboat.

My brother Walter in the former part of this letter has written a large journal which I intend to sum up in a small ledger. We have had a very prosperous voyage being wonderfully preserved in health. We can say nothing yet about the state of the country. There is a great number of people landing here but wages is good. I can neither advise nor discourage people from coming. The land is very extensive and very thin-peopled. I think we have seen as much land as might serve all the people in Britain uncultivated and covered with wood. We will write you again as soon as settled.

When Andrew has added this paragraph, Old James is persuaded to add his signature to those of his two sons before the letter is sealed and posted to Scotland from Quebec. He will write nothing else, saying, “What does it matter to me? It cannot be my home, it can be nothing to me but the land where I will die.”

“It will be that for all of us,” Andrew says. “But when the time comes we will think of it more as a home.”

“Time will not be given to me to do that.”

“Are you not well, Father?”

“I am well and I am not.”

Young James is now paying occasional attention to the old man, sometimes stopping in front of him and looking straight into his face, with a sturdy insistence.

“He bothers me,” Old James says. “I don’t like the boldness of him. He will go on and on and not remember a thing of Scotland, where he was born, or the ship he travelled on. He will get to talking another language the way they do when they go to England, only it will be worse than theirs. He looks at me with the kind of look that says he knows that me and my times is all over with.”

“He will remember plenty of things,” Mary says. Since the dancing and the incident of Mr. Suter she has grown more forthright within the family. “And he doesn’t mean his look to be bold,” she says. “It is just that he is interested in everything. He understands what you say, far more than you think. He takes everything in and he thinks about it.”

Her eyes fill with tears of enthusiasm, but the others look down at the child with sensible reservations.

Young James stands in the midst of them—bright-eyed, fair, and straight. Slightly preening, somewhat wary, unnaturally solemn, as if he had indeed felt descend upon him the burden of the future.

The adults, too, feel the astonishment of the moment. It is as if they had been borne for these past six weeks not on a ship but on one great wave, which has landed them with a mighty thump on this bewildering shore. Thoughts invade their heads, wheeling in with the gulls’ cries, their infidel commotion.

Mary thinks that she could snatch up Young James and run away into some part of the strange city of Quebec and find work as a sewing woman (talk on the boat has made her aware that such work is in demand). Then she could bring him up all by herself, as if she were his mother.

Andrew thinks of what it would be like to be here as a free man, without wife or father or sister or children, without a single burden on his back. What could he do then? He tells himself that it is no harm, surely, it is no harm to think about it.

Agnes has heard women on the boat say that the officers you see in the street here are surely the best-looking men anywhere in the world, and that they are ten or twenty times more numerous than the women. Which must mean that you can get what you want out of them—that is, marriage. Marriage to a man with enough money that you could ride in a carriage and send presents to your mother. If you were not married already and dragged down with two children.

Walter thinks that his brother is strong and Agnes is strong—she can help him on the land while Mary cares for the children. Who ever said that he should be a farmer? When they get to Montreal he will go and attach himself to the Hudson’s Bay Company and they will send him to the frontier, where he will find riches as well as adventure.

Old James has sensed defection and begins to lament openly, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

These travellers lie buried—all but one of them—in the graveyard of Boston Church, in Esquesing, in Halton County, Ontario, almost within sight, and well within sound, of Highway 401, which at that spot, just a few miles from Toronto, may be the busiest road in Canada.

Old James is here. And Andrew and Agnes. Nearby is the grave of Mary, married after all and buried beside Robert Murray, her husband. Women were scarce and so were prized

in the new country. She and Robert did not have any children together, but after Mary's early death he married another woman and with her he had four sons who lie here, dead at the ages of two, and three, and four, and thirteen. The second wife is here, too. Her stone says "Mother." Mary's says "Wife."

Agnes is here, having survived the births of many children. In a letter to Scotland, telling of the death of Old James in 1829 (a cancer, not much pain until near the end, though "it eat away a great part of his cheek and jaw"), Andrew mentions that his wife has been feeling poorly for the past three years. This may be a roundabout way of saying that during those years she bore her sixth, seventh, and eighth children. She must have recovered her health, for she lived into her eighties.

Andrew seems to have prospered, though he spread himself less than Walter, who married an American girl from Montgomery County, in New York State. Eighteen when she married him, thirty-three when she died after the birth of her ninth child. Walter did not marry again, but farmed successfully, educated his sons, speculated in land, and wrote letters to the government complaining about his taxes. He was able, before he died, to take a trip back to Scotland, where he had himself photographed wearing a plaid and holding a bouquet of thistles.

On the stone commemorating Andrew and Agnes there appears also the name of their daughter Isabel, who, like her mother, died an old woman.

Born at Sea.

Here, too, is the name of Andrew and Agnes's firstborn child, Isabel's elder brother.

Young James was dead within a month of the family's landing at Quebec. His name is here, but surely he cannot be. They had not yet taken up their land when he died; they had not even seen this place. He may have been buried somewhere along the way from Montreal to York or in that hectic new town itself. Perhaps in a raw temporary burying ground now paved over, perhaps without a stone in a churchyard, where other bodies would someday be laid on top of his. Dead of some mishap in the busy streets, or of a fever, or dysentery, or any of the ailments, the accidents, that were the common destroyers of little children in his time. ♦