and obliging wife, the forester's functions being apparently restricted to standing picturesquely propped against a tree in front of the house in a nice green shooting suit, with a telescope at his eye through which he studies the approaching or departing launch. His wife does the rest. I sat at one of the tables beneath the chestnuts waiting for my food — I had to wait a very long while — and she came out and talked. The season, she explained, was short, lasting two months, July and August, at the longest, so that her prices were necessarily high. I inquired what they were, and she said five marks a day for a front room looking over the sea, and four marks and a half for a back room looking over the forest, the price including four meals. Out of the season her charges were lower. She said most of her visitors were painters, and she could put up four-and-twenty with their wives. My luncheon came while she was still trying to find out if I were a female painter, and if not why I was there alone instead of being one of a batch, after the manner of the circumspect-petticoated, and I will only say of the luncheon that it was abundant. Its quality, after all, did not matter much. The rye grew up to within a yard of my table and made a quivering golden line of light against the blue sparkle of the sea. White butterflies danced above it. The breeze coming over it blew sweet country smells in my face. The chestnut leaves shading me rustled and whispered. All the world was gay and fresh and scented, and if the traveller does not

think these delights make up for doubtful cookery, why does he travel?

The *Frau Förster* insisted on showing me the bedrooms. They are simple and very clean, each one with a beautiful view. The rest of the house, including the dining-room, does not lend itself to enthusiastic description. I saw the long table at which the four-and-twenty painters eat. They were doing it when I looked in, and had been doing it the whole time I was under the chestnuts. It was not because of the many dishes that they sat there so long, but because of the few waiters. There were at least forty people learning to be patient, and one waiter and a boy to drive the lesson home. The bathing, too, at Vilm cannot be mentioned in the same breath with the glorious bathing at Lauterbach. There is no smiling attendant in a white sun-bonnet waiting to take your things and dry them, to rub you down when you come out shivering, and if needful jump in and pull you out when you begin to drown. At Vilm the bathing-hut lies on the east shore, and you go to it across a meadow — the divinest strip of meadow, it is true, with sea behind you and sea before you, and cattle pasturing, and a general radiant air about it as though at any moment the daughters of the gods might come over the buttercups to bleach their garments whiter in the sun. But beautiful as it is, it is a very hot walk, and there is no path. Except the path through the rye from the landing-stage up to the inn there is not a regular path on the island — only a few tracks here and there where the

cows are driven home in the evening; and to reach the bathing-hut you must plunge straight through meadow-grass, and not mind grasshoppers hopping into your clothes. Then the water is so shallow just there that you must wade quite a dangerous-looking distance before, lying down, it will cover you; and while you are wading, altogether unable, as he who has waded knows, to hurry your steps, however urgent the need, you blush to think that some or all of the four-and-twenty painters are probably sitting on rocks observing you. Wading back, of course, you blush still more. I never saw so frank a bathing-place. It is beautiful — in a lovely curve, cliffs clothed with beeches on one side, and the radiant meadow along the back of the rocks on the other; but the whole island can see you if you go out far enough to be able to swim, and if you do not you are still a conspicuous object and a very miserable one, bound to catch any wandering eye as you stand there alone, towering out of water that washes just over your ankles.

I sat in the shadow of the cliffs and watched two girls who came down to bathe. They did not seem to feel their position at all, and splashed into the water with shrieks and laughter that rang through the mellow afternoon air. So it was that I saw how shallow it is, and how embarrassing it would be to the dignified to bathe there. The girls had no dignity, and were not embarrassed. Probably one, or two, of the four-and-twenty were their fathers, and that made them feel at home. Or perhaps — and watching them I began

to think that this was so — they would rather have liked to be looked at by those of the painters who were not their fathers. Anyhow, they danced and laughed and called to each other, often glancing back inquiringly at the cliffs; and indeed they were very pretty in their little scarlet suits in the sapphire frame of the sea.

I sat there long after the girls were clothed and transformed into quite uninteresting young women, and had gone their way noisily up the grass slope into the shadows of the beeches. The afternoon stillness was left to itself again, undisturbed by anything louder than the slow ripple of the water round the base of the rocks. Sometimes a rabbit scuttled up the side of the cliff, and once a hawk cried somewhere up among the little clouds. The shadows grew very long; the shadows of the rocks on the water looked as though they would stretch across to Thiessow before the sun had done with them. Out at sea, far away beyond the hazy headland, a long streak of smoke hung above the track where a steamer had passed on the way to Russia. I wish I could fill my soul with enough of the serenity of such afternoons to keep it sweet for ever.

Vilm consists of two wooded hills joined together by a long, narrow, flat strip of land. This strip, beyond the meadow and its fringing trees, is covered with coarse grass and stones and little shells. Clumps of wild fruit trees scattered about it here and there look as if they knew what roughing it is like. The sea washes over it in

winter when the wind is strong from the east, and among the trees are frequent skeletons, dead fruit trees these many seasons past, with the tortured look peculiar to blasted trees, menacing the sky with gaunt, impotent arms. After struggling along this bit, stopping every few minutes to shake the shells out of my shoes, I came to uneven ground, soft green grass, and beautiful trees—a truly lovely part at the foot of the southern hill. Here I sat down for a moment to take the last shells out of my shoes and to drink things in. I had not seen a soul since the bathing girls, and supposed that most of the people staying at the inn would not care on hot afternoons to walk over the prickly grass and shells that must be walked over before reaching the green coolness of the end. And while I was comfortably supposing this and shaking my shoe slowly up and down and thinking how delightful it was to have the charming place to myself, I saw a young man standing on a rock under the east cliff of the hill in the very act of photographing the curving strip of land, with the sea each side of it, and myself in the middle.

Now I am not of those who like being photographed much and often. At intervals that grow longer I go through the process at the instant prayers of my nearest and dearest; but never other than deliberately, after due choice of fitting attitude and garments. The kodak and the instantaneous photograph taken before one has had time to arrange one's smile are things to be regarded with abhorrence by every woman whose faith

in her attractions is not unshakeable. Movements so graceful that the Early Victorians would have described them as swan-like — those Early Victorians who wore ringlets, curled their upper lips, had marble brows, and were called Georgiana — movements, I say, originally swan-like in grace, are translated by the irreverent snap-shot into a caricature that to the photographed appears not even remotely like, and fills the photographed's friends with an awful secret joy. 'What manner of young man is this?' I asked myself, examining him with indignation. He stood on the rock a moment, looking about as if for another good subject, and finally his eye alighted on me. Then he got off his rock and came towards me. 'What manner of young man is this?' I again asked myself, putting on my shoe in haste and wrath. He was coming to apologise, I supposed, having secured his photograph.

He was. I sat gazing severely at Thiessow. There is no running away from vain words or from anything else on an island. He was a tall young man, and there was something indefinable and reassuring about his collar.

'I am so sorry,' he said with great politeness. 'I did not notice you. Of course I did not intend to photograph you. I shall destroy the film.'

At this I felt hurt. Being photographed without permission is bad, but being told your photograph is not wanted and will be destroyed is worse. He was a very personable young man, and I like personable young men; from the way he spoke

German and from his collar I judged him English, and I like Englishmen; and he had addressed me as *gnädiges Fräulein*, and what mother of a growing family does not like that?

'I did not see you,' I said, not without blandness, touched by his youth and innocence, 'or I should have got out of your way.'

'I shall destroy the film,' he again assured me; and lifted his cap and went back to the rocks.

Now if I stayed where I was he could not photograph the strip again, for it was so narrow that I would have been again included, and he was evidently bent on getting a picture of it, and fidgeted about among the rocks waiting for me to go. So I went; and as I climbed up the south hill under the trees I mused on the pleasant slow manners of Englishmen, who talk and move as though life were very spacious and time may as well wait. Also I wondered how he had found this remote island. I was inclined to wonder that I had found it myself; but how much more did I wonder that he had found it.

There are many rabbit-holes under the trees at the south end of Vilm, and I disturbed no fewer than three snakes one after the other in the long grass. They were of the harmless kind, but each in turn made me jump and shiver, and after the third I had had enough, and clambered down the cliff on the west side and went along at the foot of it towards the farthest point of the island, with the innocent intention of seeing what was round the corner. The young man was round the

corner, and I walked straight into another photograph; I heard the camera snap at the very instant that I turned the bend.

This time he looked at me with something of a grave inquiry in his eye.

'I assure you I do not *want* to be photographed,' I said hastily.

'I hope you believe that I did not intend to do it again,' he replied.

'I am very sorry,' said I.

'I shall destroy the film,' said he.

'It seems a great waste of films,' said I.

The young man lifted his cap; I continued my way among the rocks eastward; he went steadily in the opposite direction; round the other side of the hill we met again.

'Oh,' I cried, genuinely disturbed, 'have I spoilt another?'

The young man smiled—certainly a very personable young man—and explained that the light was no longer strong enough to do any more. Again in this explanation did he call me *gnädiges Fräulein*, and again was I touched by so much innocence. And his German, too, was touching; it was so conscientiously grammatical, so laboriously put together, so like pieces of Goethe learned by heart.

By this time the sun hung low over the houses of Putbus, and the strip of sand with its coarse grass and weatherbeaten trees was turned by the golden flush into a fairy bridge, spanning a mystic sea, joining two wonderful, shining islands. We walked along with all the radiance in our faces.

It is, as I have observed, impossible to get away from any one on an island that is small enough. We were both going back to the inn, and the strip of land is narrow. Therefore we went together, and what that young man talked about the whole way in the most ponderous German was the Absolute.

I can't think what I have done that I should be talked to for twenty minutes by a nice young man who mistook me for a Fräulein about the Absolute. He evidently thought — the innocence of him! — that being German I must, whatever my sex and the shape of my head, be interested. I don't know how it began. It was certainly not my fault, for till that day I had had no definite attitude in regard to it. Of course I did not tell him that. Age has at least made me artful. A real Fräulein would have looked as vacant as she felt, and have said, 'What is the Absolute?' Being a matron and artful, I simply looked thoughtful — quite an easy thing to do — and said, 'How do *you* define it?'

He said he defined it as a negation of the conceivable. Continuing in my artfulness I said that there was much to be said for that view of it, and asked how he had reached his conclusions. He explained elaborately. Clearly he took me to be an intelligent Fräulein, and indeed I gave myself great pains to look like one.

It appeared that he had a vast admiration for everything German, and especially for German erudition. Well, we are very erudite in places. Unfortunately no erudition comes up my way.

My acquaintances do not ask the erudite to dinner, one of the reasons, as insufficient as the rest, being that they either wear day clothes in the evening, or, if worldly enough to dress, mar the effect by white satin ties with horse-shoe pins in them; and another is that they are Liberals, and therefore uninvitable. When the unknown youth, passing naturally from Kant and the older philosophers to the great Germans now living, enthusiastically mentioned the leading lights in science and art and asked if I knew them or had ever seen them — the mere seeing of them he seemed to think would be a privilege — I could only murmur no. How impossible to explain to this scion of an unprejudiced race the limitless objection of the class called *Junker* — I am a female *Junker* — to mix on equal terms with the class that wears white satin ties in the evening. But it is obvious that a man who can speak with the tongue of angels, who has put his seal on his century, and who will be remembered when we have returned, forgotten, to the Prussian dust from which we came — or rather not forgotten because we were at no time remembered, but simply ignored — it is obvious that such a man may wear what tie he pleases when he comes to dine, and still ought to be received on metaphorical knees of reverence and gratitude. Probably, however, if we who live in the country and think no end of ourselves did invite such a one, and whether there were hostesses on knees waiting for him or not, he would not come. How bored he would be if he did. He would find us full of

those excellences Pater calls the more obvious parochial virtues, jealous to madness of the sensitive and bloodthirsty appendage known as our honour, exact in the observance of minor conventionalities, correct in our apparel, rigid in our views, and in our effect uninterruptedly soporific. The man who had succeeded in pushing his thoughts farther into the region of the hitherto unthought than any of his contemporaries would not, I think, if he came once, come again. But it is supposing the impossible, after all, to suppose him invited, for all the great ones of whom the unknown youth talked are Liberals, and all the *Junkers* are Conservatives; and how shall a German Conservative be the friend of a German Liberal? The thing is unthinkable. Like the young man's own definition of the Absolute, it is a negation of the conceivable.

By the time we had reached the chestnut grove in front of the inn I had said so little that my companion was sure I was one of the most intelligent women he had ever met. I know he thought so, for he turned suddenly to me as we were walking past the Frau Förster's wash-house and rose-garden up to the chestnuts, and said, 'How is it that German women are so infinitely more intellectual than Englishwomen?'

Intellectual! How nice. And all the result of keeping quiet in the right places.

'I did not know they were,' I said modestly; which was true.

'Oh but they are,' he assured me with great positiveness; and added, 'Perhaps you have noticed that I am English?'

Noticed that he was English? From the moment I first saw his collar I suspected it; from the moment he opened his mouth and spoke I knew it; and so did everybody else under the chestnuts who heard him speaking as he passed. But why not please this artless young man? So I looked at him with the raised eyebrows of intense surprise and said, 'Oh, are you English?'

'I have been a good deal in Germany,' he said, looking happy.

'But it is extraordinary,' I said.

'It is not so very difficult,' he said, looking more and more happy.

'But really not German? *Fabelhaft.*'

The young man's belief in my intelligence was now unshakeable. The Frau Förster, who had seen me disembark and set out for my walk alone, and who saw me now returning with a companion of the other sex, greeted me coldly. Her coldness, I felt, was not unjustifiable. It is not my practice to set out by myself and come back telling youths I have never seen before that their accomplishments are *fabelhaft*. I began to feel coldly towards myself, and turning to the young man said goodbye with some abruptness.

'Are you going in?' he asked.

'I am not staying here.'

'But the launch does not start for an hour. I go across too, then.'

'I am not crossing in the launch. I came over in a fishing-smack.'

'Oh really?' He seemed to meditate. 'How delightfully independent,' he added.

'Have you not observed that the German Fräulein is as independent as she is intellectual?'

'No, I have not. That is just where I think the Germans are so far behind us. Their women have nothing like the freedom ours have.'

'What, not when they sail about all alone in fishing-smacks?'

'That certainly is unusually enterprising. May I see you safely into it?'

The Frau Förster came towards us and told him that the food he had ordered for eight o'clock was ready.

'No, thank you,' I said, 'don't bother. There is a fisherman and a boy to help me in. It is quite easy.'

'Oh but it is no bother——'

'I will not take you away from your supper.'

'Are you not going to have supper here?'

'I lunched here to-day. So I will not sup.'

'Is the reason a good one?'

'You will see. Good-bye.'

I went away down the path to the beach. The path is steep, and the corn on either side stands thick and high, and a few steps took me out of sight of the house, the chestnuts, and the young man. The smack was lying some distance out, and the dinghy was tied to her stern. The fisherman's son's head was visible in a peaceful position

on a heap of ropes. It is difficult as well as embarrassing to shout, as I well knew, but somebody would have to, and as nobody was there but myself I was plainly the one to do it. I put my hands to my mouth, and not knowing the fisherman's name called out *Sie*. It sounded not only feeble but rude. When I remembered the appearance of the golden-bearded Viking, his majestic presence and dreamy dignity, I was ashamed to find myself standing on a rock and calling him as loud as I could *Sie*.

The head on the ropes did not stir. I waved my handkerchief. The boy's eyes were shut. Again I called out *Sie*, and thought it the most offensive of pronouns. The boy was asleep, and my plaintive cry went past him over the golden ripples towards Lauterbach.

Then the Englishman appeared against the sky, up on the ridge of the cornfield. He saw my dilemma, and taking his hands out of his pockets ran down. '*Gnädiges Fräulein* is in a fix,' he observed in his admirably correct and yet so painful German.

'She is,' I said.

'Shall I shout?'

'Please.'

He shouted. The boy started up in alarm. The fisherman's huge body reared up from the depths of the boat. In two minutes the dinghy was at the little plank jetty, and I was in it.

'It was a very good idea to charter one of those

romantic smacks to come over in,' said the young man on the jetty wistfully.

'They're rather fishy,' I replied, smiling, as we pushed off.

'But so very romantic.'

'Have you not observed that the German Fräulein is a romantic creature,'—the dinghy began to move—'a beautiful mixture of intelligence, independence, and romance?'

'Are you staying at Putbus?'

'No. Good-bye. Thanks for coming down and shouting. You know your food will be quite cold and uneatable.'

'I gathered from what you said before that it will be uneatable anyhow.'

The dinghy was moving fast. There was a rapidly-widening strip of golden water between myself and the young man on the jetty.

'Not all of it,' I said, raising my voice. 'Try the compote. It is lovely compote. It is what you would call in England glorified gooseberry jam.'

'Glorified gooseberry jam?' echoed the young man, apparently much struck by these three English words. 'Why,' he added, speaking louder, for the golden strip had grown very wide, 'you said that without the ghost of a foreign accent!'

'Did I?'

The dinghy shot into the shadow of the fishing-smack. The Viking and the boy shipped their oars, helped me in, tied the dinghy to the stern,

hoisted the sail, and we dropped away into the sunset.

The young man on the distant jetty raised his cap. He might have been a young archangel, standing there the centre of so much glory. Certainly a very personable young man.