

## American Stories



### A PACIFIC BASIN INSTITUTE BOOK

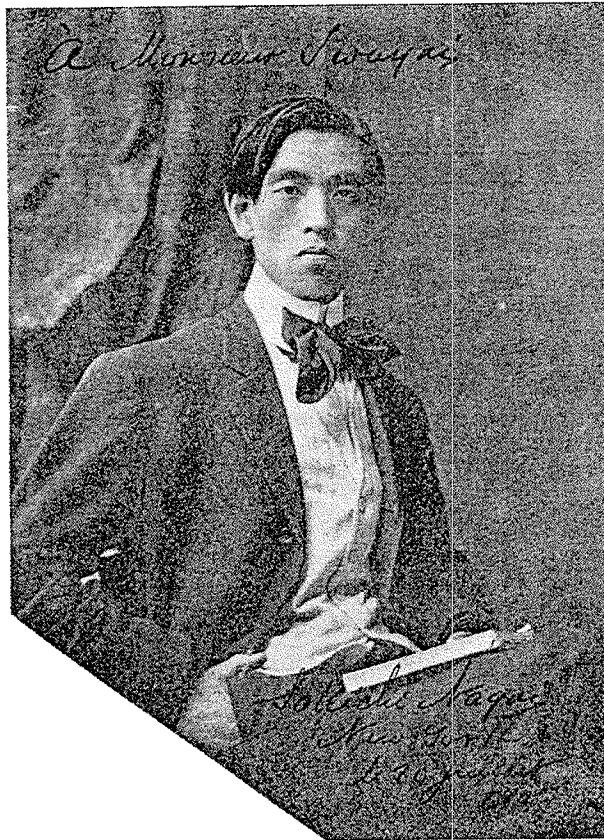
*American Stories* is the eighth volume to be published in The Library of Japan series, a selected cross-section of modern Japanese fiction and nonfiction in translation for presentation to American readers. Produced by the Pacific Basin Institute at Pomona College, as part of a plan evolved under the aegis of the Japan-United States Conference on Cultural and Educational Exchange (CULCON), this series is designed to make Americans aware of the social and cultural underpinnings of modern Japan, offering works either unavailable in English translation or difficult for most general readers to obtain.

Volumes previously published include *Silk and Insight*, by Mishima Yukio; *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*; *Labyrinth*, by Arishima Takeo; *Konoe Fumimaro, A Political Biography*, by Oka Yoshitake; *Kokoro and Selected Essays*, by Natsume Sōseki; *The Spirit of Japanese Capitalism*, by Yamamoto Shichihei; and Ōoka Shōhei's *Taken Captive: A Prisoner of War's Diary*. Frank Gibney and J. Thomas Rimer are the editors of the series. The editors and the publisher would like to thank the Japan Foundation for its generous support in making this publication possible.

## Nagai Kafū

*translated and with an introduction by Mitsuko Iriye*

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From around October in the fall of 1903, I spent leisurely time in the United States and left New York for France last summer, July 1907; on that occasion I collected the various pieces I had written during my journey, which I have now entitled *American Stories* and respectfully present to my revered teacher and friend, Mr. Iwaya Sazanami.

*Nagai Kafu*

Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent  
Pour partir; coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,  
De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écarterent,  
Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours: Allons!

(*Le Voyage*—Ch. Baudelaire)

The true travelers are those who leave for the sole purpose  
Of leaving. With hearts as light as balloons, unable to flee  
From ill fate, they just call out all the time, Let's go  
Let's go, without knowing why.

(*Le Voyage*—Ch. Baudelaire)\*

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\*Literal rendition into English of Kafū's translation from the original. Kafū makes a mistake in thinking that the word *seuls* (only) modifies the verb *partent* (leave), instead of *ceux-là* (those).



## Night Talk in a Cabin

Crossing the seas with no land in sight anywhere is almost unbearably tedious, and the voyage between Yokohama and the port of the newly developed city of Seattle is no exception.

Once the passengers have parted with the mountains of their homeland on the day of sailing, they cannot expect to see a single island, a single mountain, for more than half a month, until the day when they reach the continent on the other side of the ocean. It was all ocean yesterday, and so it is again today—one gets a view of the never-changing Pacific Ocean as simply vast, where all one can see are gray albatrosses with long wings and crooked beaks, flying about among giant, undulating waves. To make matters worse, pleasant, clear days become rarer and rarer as the ship steadily advances northward, and practically every day, not only is the sky completely covered by gloomy gray clouds, but it is even likely that rain or fog will come.

I have unexpectedly been a wayfarer in this desolate ocean now for ten days. During the day it is possible somehow to kill time playing ring toss on the deck or playing cards in the smoking room, but once dinner is over at night, there is hardly anything left to do. Furthermore, it seems that the weather has turned considerably colder today. Thinking that it would be impossible to walk across the deck to the smoking room without an overcoat, I shut myself up in my cabin. I was just wondering if perhaps I should lie down on the sofa and read

some of the magazines I brought from Japan, when someone softly knocked on the door with a fingertip.

"Come in," I called out, sitting up.

The door opened. "What's the matter? It is swaying again a little, don't you think? Do you feel weak?"

"Oh, no," I replied. "I decided to withdraw to my room since it was a bit cold. Do sit down."

"Yes, it is really cold. They say we are about to pass the Gulf of Alaska," said Yanagida, sitting down at the end of the sofa, a smile on his lips, adorned with a rather thin moustache. He is a gentleman with whom I have become acquainted on this voyage.

Of middle height and build, he seemed to be over thirty by at least one or two years. He was wearing a brown overcoat over a striped suit and displayed a colorful necktie from a high collar. Resting one leg over his knee in a rather affected manner and knocking off cigar ashes with the tip of his ringed small finger, he said, "It will be beautiful weather in Japan now."

"Yes, indeed."

"Are you trying to remember something?"

"Ha ha. That's something you should say to the fellow next door."

"Maybe. Speaking of the fellow next door, how is he doing? He must be holed up in his cabin as usual. Why don't we invite him over?"

"Good," I said and knocked on the wall two or three times. There was no answer for a while, but presently Kishimoto, who occupied the cabin next door, appeared at my cabin door and said in his usual weak voice, "What is it?"

"Hello, come in!" the chic Yanagida called out immediately in an affected pronunciation.

"Thank you, but I am dressed like this, so . . ." answered Kishimoto, still standing.

"My dear fellow, don't stand on silly ceremony. This is my room. It doesn't matter if you are undressed or whatever. So do come in." I stood up from the sofa and opened up the folding chair that had been propped up against the wall.

Kishimoto was also about thirty years old and of rather short stature, and was wearing a *haori* [half-coat] made of Ōshima pongee over a lined pongee kimono and an unlined flannel garment.

"All right, thanks." He sat down, after a small bow, and said, "It is too cold in Western clothes, and so I was about to change into my night clothes and go to bed."

Yanagida responded in a most puzzled tone, looking at Kishimoto, "Do you mean Western clothes don't keep you warm? In my case, it is exactly the opposite. On a voyage like this, especially, if I put on Japanese clothes, I'll feel too chilly around the neck and will catch a cold right away."

"Is that so? Maybe this means that I have not quite gotten used to Western clothes."

"Not really. When it's cold, it doesn't matter what you wear," I said, just smiling and looking at both of them. "By the way, Yanagida, I know you are a drinker. Shall I order something for you?"

"Well, I don't particularly feel like it tonight. I just came over for a chat, as I was getting bored."

Pressing the bell, I said, "But it isn't much fun talking without holding glasses. So shall we hear your story again, Kishimoto?"

But Kishimoto did not respond and, looking up, said, "The ship seems to be swaying a great deal again."

"Well, after all, this is the Pacific Ocean," Yanagida put in, twisting his thin moustache once again.

I was just responding, "If this were the second or third day of our voyage, we would suffer more, but we seem to have gotten used to it and don't feel anything, do we?" when a cabin boy opened the door.

"Yanagida, do you want whisky as usual?"

The cabin boy, after hearing his "Of course," gently closed the door and went away, but at that very moment, we heard the deep roaring sound of the foghorn, followed by a sound of waves washing the decks.

"It does rock a little, doesn't it? Well, that's all right. Let's have a nice little chat this evening," said Yanagida, stretching his legs comfortably. Glancing around the ceiling of the cabin, brightly lit with electric lights, the kimono-clad Kishimoto said, "What is wrong? They are blowing the foghorn a great deal, aren't they?"

"Maybe the fog has thickened." Yanagida started to explain but was interrupted by the cabin boy, who promptly brought the ordered drinks on a tray and, after placing them on a small table by the bed, filled the glasses. As soon as he left again, first Yanagida raised his cup and offered his "Good luck!" followed by our repeated, laughing "Good luck!"s.

Time passed. In the far distance the forlorn sound of a bell tolling the time could be heard. Just then, the waves seemed to swell higher and higher until we heard them hitting the round porthole above the bed with a crushing sound and dashing against the deck area, while the wind sweeping by the tall masts sounded just like the dry winds of February in Tokyo. The grating sound of something creaking somewhere began. But this was a large ship of considerable tonnage, so the rolling and pushing were rather gentle, and, as we had become used to the voyage, we didn't worry about getting seasick at all. As we drew the curtains over the porthole and door so that the tiny cabin would be warmed by steam and reclined on armchairs, listening to the storm outside, all this somehow recalled the comfort of a fireside on a winter night. Yanagida seemed to feel the same way, as he said, putting down his whisky glass, "Don't you think that once you believe in your own safety, even raging storms outside somehow sound attractive?"

"Quite. I guess this is what is meant by 'feeling secure like being

on a big boat.' But suppose this were a sailboat, then I am sure it's quite possible that we might be shipwrecked," said Kishimoto in a serious tone.

"It's the same with everything. Whenever some are having fun, others may have to suffer. Like a fire—it is a disaster to those who lose their home, but a great spectacle for the rest." I intoned some such silly argument, having perhaps drunk too much whisky.

"It's true, it is quite true," Yanagida responded, as if deeply moved by something. "To continue your metaphor, I am one of those who have lost their homes. I lost my home in a fire and am fleeing all the way to America. Actually, it was only last year that I returned to Japan, and I am amazed at myself for having started my overseas trip again even before I had time to unpack all my trunks."

Both Kishimoto and I eagerly asked Yanagida to tell us about his aspirations behind this trip to America, assuming that he must have entertained grand thoughts; he was the kind of person who could not talk of little things without discussing such items as the civilization of a continent or the pettiness of an island country.

"Ha, ha, ha. I really don't have anything like a grand idea. However . . ." Yanagida twisted his thin moustache and began telling us his story.

It went back to the time when he graduated from a certain school. Immediately, he was employed by a firm and proceeded to Australia with great eagerness. After a considerable amount of time, he returned to his native Japan with a sense of triumph immeasurably greater than when he had initially left the country. He preached and praised the civilization of the continent and the commerce of the world everywhere to whomever he met, including his old friends who gave him welcome parties. And he never doubted that the minuscule island country would surely offer him an important position. But instead, he was assigned a job as a translator at the head office, with a monthly wage of only forty Japanese (devalued silver) yen. He did not protest and accepted the

job, after carefully considering conditions in Japan. But he could not help constantly feeling dissatisfied, and, in order to relieve himself of that feeling, decided to look for a wife, preferably a beautiful daughter of an aristocratic family, and started to campaign actively in that direction. He was secretly confident that being someone who had returned from abroad would recommend him to such young women or their mothers, but in reality nothing of the sort happened. The daughter of a certain viscount whom he pursued ended up marrying a university graduate of the island country, the type of person he scorned the most. Not only had his self-confidence been shattered twice, he now had to suffer from a broken heart.

But Yanagida never completely gave up hope. As a reaction against his pain, he began denouncing everything about the island country even more strongly than before and decided to undertake another joyful trip abroad.

"As long as you are in Japan, it is simply impossible to shout with delight from the bottom of your heart. Luckily, it so happened that a raw-silk merchant in Yokohama wanted me to study conditions in the United States, and I gladly accepted. When it comes to business, you must really go abroad at all costs. I am very happy to see that you gentlemen, my compatriots, are also going to the United States." Yanagida picked up his glass, took a sip, and turned his body around, saying, "Kishimoto, didn't you tell me that you wanted to go to school in the United States?"

"Yes," Kishimoto answered, pulling the neckbands of his kimono closer together.

"Are you planning to enter some university?"

"Well, I'd like to, but right now I don't have the language and don't quite understand how things work. . . ."

"Do you see, Yanagida? Kishimoto has left Japan in order to pursue his studies, even at the expense of leaving his wife and child

behind." As I said this, Yanagida leaned forward and asked, "Kishimoto, do you already have a child?"

"Yes," was all Kishimoto said, blushing a little.

"Then you must really have made a great commitment."

"Well, I would like to think I made a big effort when I left the country. There were some relatives and others who were violently opposed to my plans." This time it was Kishimoto's turn to tell his story.

He had also worked for a company in Tokyo; however, not only did he have little prospect for career advancement, he was constantly being pushed down by others, the reason presumably being, he thought, that he had not graduated from any school and therefore had no degree. While he was pondering these facts, his company undertook a reorganization, and he was going to be dismissed. Luckily for him, since his wife had inherited a considerable fortune, he was spared the plight of an ordinary person under the same circumstances. On the contrary, his wife actually seemed happy and thought that this was a good turn of events, telling him that they should leave the noise of Tokyo behind with their sweet little child and move to some quiet countryside and live in peace and comfort, making use of her money.

But Kishimoto was not about to yield to his wife's gentle words. Instead, he told her that, if possible, he would like to make use of the property she had inherited from her late father and study in the United States for a couple of years. She, however, was firmly opposed, not because she begrudged him the money but because she simply did not want to part from the husband she loved dearly. She told him that she didn't want him to strain himself to succeed for her sake, that he should not feel embarrassed that he was being passed over by former houseboys with bachelor's degrees, and besides, wasn't it enough for everyone to act according to his ability and live a peaceful life every day? Yet, faced with her husband's resolute entreaties, in the end she yielded and tearfully saw Kishimoto go off to a faraway land.

"So, I am hoping to shorten my stay as much as possible and go home with whatever degree I may obtain from a school. A diploma will be the best present to show my wife."

Having said this much, Kishimoto gulped down a mouthful of whisky while making a face, as if to cheer himself up.

"Yes, I really feel for you. At the same time, though, I congratulate you on your daring decision with all my heart." Yanagida raised his glass after him, then changed his tone. "But you must be reminded of your wife all the time, even though I myself don't know yet what it's like to have a wife."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha. I can't be so spineless now that I have come this far . . . ha, ha, ha, ha." Kishimoto forced a laugh but looked quite distressed.

Just then, the clanging of the bell could be heard once again. The waves and the winds were still raging outside the porthole, barely kept out by a single pane, but inside the closed cabin it was already too warm, with the aroma of alcohol and cigarette smoke. We had grown a little weary of talking and, as if for the first time, looked at the electric lights that were brightening up every corner of the cabin. Before long Yanagida pulled out his watch, as though he suddenly remembered something, and said, "It's already eleven o'clock."

"Is that right? Forgive me for having stayed for such a long time. I shall be going now." Kishimoto stood up first.

"Oh, please stay."

"Thank you. I have really enjoyed myself tonight, thanks to you. It will be nice to spend tomorrow like this again. I must be going."

Opening the door, Yanagida said "Good night" in English, and while he mumbled some unintelligible English poem, his footsteps soon faded away in the direction of his cabin. In the cabin next door, in the meantime, I could hear the faint sound of the bed curtain being drawn. Kishimoto, who had also left my cabin, must already be lying down in his lonely bed.

(November 1903)



## A Return Through the Meadow

If I remember correctly, it was already the last Saturday of October in Tacoma, where I was staying at that time.

Fall was coming to an end, and just about all the leaves—from those on the rows of maple trees planted on both sides of the streets to those on the trees that had provided cool shade in the parks and people's gardens during the summer—had fallen after the previous night's dense fog. Not just here in Tacoma but along the Pacific Coast of the United States, it would be the sad month of November in less than a week. From then till next May it would be rainy and foggy practically every day, and it would be next to impossible to see clear skies. People said the day's cloudless weather might give us the last chance this year to look at a blue sky. So, on the advice of a friend who knew the local conditions very well, I decided to spend the day bicycling in late autumn's prairies with him.

Leaving the house, we ride toward the east along a straight road uptown called Tacoma Avenue. The city of Tacoma faces Puget Sound, an inland sea with very heavy traffic, and is built on a sharp incline, so that, as we turn around, we can see the whole city in one glance—countless roofs and chimneys, vast landfills, docks, several ships at anchor, trains belonging to the Northern Pacific Railway. And atop the mountain range beyond the bay, the snow-clad Mount Rainier, called "Tacoma Fuji" by the Japanese, rises majestically,



## The Inebriated Beauty

In the summer of 1904 I had a most ideal guide with whom to visit the World's Fair that was being held in St. Louis.

He was an American named S—, an artist with whom I had earlier stayed at the same boarding house outside Chicago, and we had become quite friendly as a result. He told me that his work was being exhibited at the Fair and so, knowing that he lived in a village in Missouri called Highland, which was not far from St. Louis, I first sent him a telegram and then boarded a train from Michigan up north. The trip would take fifteen or sixteen hours, and for scenery along the way, as is so frequently the case on this American continent, there was little else than vast cornfields, an occasional brook where cattle would come to drink water, or a hill with two or three farmers' houses with clumps of trees that appeared to be orchards. But I did not grow too weary and crossed the state of Illinois agreeably daydreaming all alone. Before long, the train crossed the famous East Bridge built from East St. Louis across the great Mississippi River.

By the time roofs in the outskirts of St. Louis begin to come into view, innumerable tracks carrying trains from all over the new North American continent can be seen converging like a spiderweb onto this midwestern city, their terminus. Amid whirling dust and coal fumes, our train enters the railway compound that is filled with all kinds of noise, combining into a roar. Many huge, mountainlike locomotives

go back and forth, emitting black smoke, in the middle of which two rows of cars, perhaps heading east, cross our train, while along far-away tracks, a train is seen moving in the same direction as ours. Trains belonging to just about every railway company in the United States arrive at the platforms in this great central station.

I got off the train and walked with the crowd to the very end of the long platform. When we went out through the exit with a tall iron railing, there was a sea of men's and women's hats in a cement-paved square under a tall roof. But Americans are quite used to this sort of confusion, and my friend S— quickly spotted me and came running over. With a cheerful "How do you do?"—the standard Western greeting—he shook my hand.

Dispensing with formalities, I asked him what artwork he was exhibiting, and he answered, "Thank you," twice, as if very pleased. But he said we would talk about it at greater leisure later; as the city's hotels were too crowded and unbearable in this heat, he suggested that I come to Highland anyway. I let him lead me out of the spacious, stone-built station, under the glaring summer sun, and we walked for about two blocks on streets that were crowded with carriages and people. "We take that blue car for one hour, and then it will stop at a corner in Highland, just across from my house," S— said, waving at a streetcar about to overtake us. I jumped on with him, and thus we gradually left behind the crowded streets of St. Louis.

Passing the outskirts of the city—as everywhere, filled with shabby shacks, saloons, and cheap lodging places that mingle with large brick factories—we soon come to woods of maple and oak trees above bright green wild grass, appearing on both sides of the car tracks without interruption. How lovely are the sunlight penetrating layers of tiny leaves and the color of the blue sky that can be seen from time to time through tree branches! How gentle, friendly are these woods of Missouri, in contrast to the dark, damp, vast, deep

forests that occupy the Cascades, the Rockies, and the entire Northwest Coast of North America, evoking only fear in men.

"I just love these woods!" I cried out, and S— looked very happy, saying, "I live in a small village in the middle of one of these maple woods. It has nothing besides bright green grass, ribbonlike streams, and a perpetually blue sky. But my landlady has nice cows and sheep, and I am sure she will treat you to delicious homemade ice cream."

So saying, he pulled out his watch and said, "We are almost there. We'll soon be in a village called Kirkwood in the woods. Once we pass it, we will be in Highland."

Even as he was talking, we seemed to pass the village he mentioned, with its large stone churches and people's homes looming, again amid bright green trees; after that, the road went up and down for a while, and then S— patted me on the shoulder and said, "Here we are!"

When I got off the car, I saw that it was indeed a quiet village where practically all one saw were the indigo-colored sky and green foliage; in contrast to St. Louis and other large cities where the fierce summer temperatures were over one hundred degrees, here it was cool, with breezes whispering among the tree leaves. In the meadows visible beyond the woods, cattle were mooing languidly in the summer afternoon, while in the fields at the back of nearby houses, hens were starting to cackle. It was as if I were in a dream, recalling the hustle and bustle of St. Louis that I had left behind only one hour earlier.

"It is a little far from the Fair, but we can get there in forty minutes by train. So why don't you stay in this area like me?" S— asked.

How could I object? In the villages around there, just about every farmer's house was making the best room available to rent to summer vacationers from the cities and, especially this year, to Fair visitors. So I decided to stay in a room two houses down from where S— was renting his own.

The very next day, we started going to the Fair. But before any sightseeing, I had first to visit S—'s exhibit.

Together with him, I take the train to the rear entrance of the Fair and, walking past a grove, we come right away to the art gallery in three separate buildings. The central building is for art from the United States, and he tells me his work is on display there. I ask him to take me in immediately. He goes ahead of me, passes through a number of exhibition rooms, and eventually enters a rather narrow, elongated room. "There," he says, stopping to turn back toward me and pointing to a painting of a nude hanging on the west wall.

He must have used a woman from Egypt or Arabia as a model. A buxom woman with black hair and black eyes is lying on her back on a couch, barely twisting her head toward the front and holding a half-emptied wine glass in her hand. Her large, bright black eyes appear already leaden from exquisite tipsiness, but they have an indescribable expression, as if she were gazing at something. For a while S— remained silent, facing his nude beauty, and then said, "I had so much trouble with those slightly tipsy eyes, of course. But I worked even harder on the skin color of a colored race, although people have not much appreciated this. I thought to myself, the whole body is permeated with the warmth of the wine, while inside her veins arise the passions of the so-called tropical climate. . . . The meaning of this I think I managed to convey not so much with the expression of her eyes as with the tone of her skin bathed by lamplight. What do you think? Don't you agree?"

I could not give a definite answer and continued to gaze at the painting in silence, but he resumed right away, "It may be that such a subject shouldn't be included in art. Actually, I thought of trying some such work when I heard a true story about a certain former French friend of mine."

He wanted to go on, but at this moment a group of several women entered the room, talking loudly, so he glanced at them and

said, "Why don't we take a look around? In the galleries, some works by British and French masters like Millet and Corot are on display."

We walked in that direction. After viewing most of the exhibited works in the central pavilion, we entered the east pavilion and looked around at the paintings sent from England, Germany, Holland, Sweden, and other countries. Time passed amazingly fast, and soon it would be six o'clock, closing time. So we decided to come back on another day for the offerings from France, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Portugal, and Japan among them in the west pavilion, and exited the east pavilion with the crowd of people. Exhausted, we sat down on a bench at the foot of the grand concert hall [Festival Hall], in front of which cascades were overflowing from three staircases and a large basin.

This area has the most spectacular prospect within the Fair grounds, the circumference of which is more than seven miles. It looks down in one sweeping view over the far-off main entrance and the plaza with a tall monument and numerous statues. Among the huge buildings standing like castles, one can see a spacious pond, looking almost like a lake, into which cascades of water fall, running from the towering basins above us and down the tall flights of stairs. Even small ships and gondolas of various sizes that float around the tremendous water fountain can be seen from where we are.

This much is already an amazing sight, but wait till bells begin to toll somewhere in the Fair grounds and, simultaneously, the sun sets completely beyond the woods in the background; then every last snow-white building is illuminated in blue, red, and other colored lights, so that the many nude statues standing under the pale blue sky look as though, having absorbed these lights, they have just now awakened from a sleep of death and are floating out from around the staircases and roofs of various buildings, ready to start dancing to the band music that begins to be heard here and there.

An extraordinary nightless city! This surely is one of the magical worlds created by the wealth of the Americans.

I was simply dumbfounded and looked around as if in a daze, but as for S—, he was busily chewing tobacco and watching the crowd of people as they came climbing upstairs; whenever a particularly young and beautiful woman passed, he nodded to himself and closely watched her, even as she walked away.

"Is there anyone you could use as a model?" I asked, to which he replied as he spat out the tobacco unceremoniously, "Those are rather rare. But it is a lot of fun to watch buxom young women, even if they may be no good as models. This pleasure is a great privilege God has bestowed on us, so we men have a duty to devote our whole lives to the study of women. It's hard to beat a Frenchman when it comes to this. I had a very close friend, a journalist who had come from France. He was avidly studying how much pleasure a male body could receive from a woman, but he died a young man while in the middle of his research. He had sacrificed himself. This happened some time ago, but I have always wanted to express one of his experiences in my own work. That is why I finally made that particular painting. . . . Have I told you its title? The slightly inebriated naked beauty. It's called *The Moment Before a Dream*."

I have forgotten to mention that this S— is very much a Francophile, but he has never been to France and doesn't know much of the language, either. But he believes, arbitrarily, that since his ancestors were pureblooded Frenchmen who came to the new continent about a century ago, and especially since his grandfather married an actress from France, it is certainly in his blood to become an artist. Moreover, he has concluded that strong-willed and excessively clear-headed Americans are not likely to succeed as artists.

Having spat out all his tobacco, he pulled out some cigars this time, and, offering me one, he continued, "That man's research was really quite valuable for us. Monsieur Mantéro was his name. When

he first came to America, he was often grumbling that he could not stand such a drab and uncivilized country, that apart from some chic-looking women, all you saw were Jews with their pointy noses and Negroes with thick lips, or that there was not a single place where you could have a pleasant dinner. But strangely enough, soon he became infatuated with a woman of mixed breed, with some Negro blood in her.

"The reason was that, one evening, after he had had dinner at a restaurant in town, he started walking aimlessly and passed a dingy little theater. At the entrance there were various painted posters and photos, including a painting of a plump woman kicking her leg up high and dancing. In France, the birthplace of such pictures, one can encounter hundreds, even thousands of them in an hour in the streets, so M. Mantéro hadn't paid much attention. But instead of walking away, he bought a ticket and went in.

"It was the kind of vaudeville one sees in any American city. After some acrobatics, burlesque dancing, and rapid playing of various musical instruments, a woman with a substantial amount of black blood in her veins—one could see she must have been the subject of the poster at the entrance—dashed out from backstage and started dancing energetically, with her short hair parted in the middle and wearing a short costume exposing her upper torso. But to his eyes this was nothing unusual. He could barely stifle the yawn that was already welling up in his throat, but he could not just avert his eyes, so he continued to look vaguely in the direction of the stage. But then suddenly he realized how plump her frame was—perhaps this was typical of a young black woman—and said to himself that it would be worth studying how such a frame differed from that of a white woman, something he had never given much thought to. . . . So he began paying closer attention to the stage, where the woman, each time she came to rest after a dance number, would beckon passionately to the spectators with her large dark eyes. His interest was aroused anew. That

look in her eyes, he thought, does not really belong to us civilized humans. Rather, it reminds one of a domestic animal begging his master for food. Thus thinking, Mantéro could no longer suppress his curiosity—or rather, as he was wont to force such curiosity out of himself, he did not hesitate to return to the same vaudeville show for three more evenings or so. And it was all too easy; they shook hands, and within less than an hour they were already arm-in-arm like old acquaintances and heading toward her lodging for fun.

"And here he readily discovered something: unlike a woman of a civilized country, this woman of mixed blood did not have the least desire to enjoy herself by trifling with men's feelings, using artistic gestures and manners or suggestive conversations with hidden meanings. Rather, from the slightest quivering of her eyelashes to the subtle movements of her fingertips, she seemed to be trying to feel all the pleasure she could obtain for her bodily senses.

"It so happened that this was a cold winter night, and she shut her room up completely as she built a big fire. She then drew up a soft sofa with velvet upholstery; the two of them stretch themselves on it while she warms the tips of her toes and the soles of her bare feet, already rid of shoes and stockings. Next she crosses her arms behind her head as if she were holding it, and as all parts of her body gradually warm up, she forcefully stretches herself and twists her body here and there; once she feels that all her muscles have been sufficiently softened, for one last time she flexes her whole body from her fingertips to the tips of her toes. Then, drawing a long breath, and already limp, she quickly throws down her upper body upon him and, as she slowly smokes a fragrant Turkish cigarette, she intensely watches its blue smoke, which hangs motionlessly in the light of a lamp covered with a pale red chimney.

"After a while, she finishes smoking a couple of cigarettes with him and empties in one gulp a glass of champagne, which to her is even more precious than jewelry. All at once, the blood within her

whole body seems to boil with tremendous force, caused by the warmth of the wine inside and the fire of the hearth outside. Her eyelids look leaden, as if she is too weary to open her eyes even halfway. Still, she stares at him and around the room intently. But this lasts only a moment, and in no time she drops one arm from the sofa to the floor as though her body has lost all its bones, and she dozes off. That very moment of entering dreamland, she believes, is nothing short of earthly paradise.

"This curious discovery must have given great satisfaction to Mantéro, for he kept visiting her room for three months, without skipping a single night. But, as is usually the case with such a person, as soon as the weather changed he began craving something different. Now he made up his mind to see her for one last time and even told her unambiguously, before he took his leave, 'I am going to be busy with my work for a while and won't be able to come.' Yet the following evening, as he came out of the restaurant where he always had dinner, he noticed the lights radiating beautifully from the lamps above the city streets, and he thought the women passing to and fro seemed even more suggestive than during the day. He paused at a corner of an intersection for a while, but a strange sensation, something he had never experienced before, made him feel impatient and compelled him to walk fast, faster, to what destination he didn't know. But when he came to himself, to his amazement, he found himself in front of the house where that woman lodged.

"It is too late to turn back now. So he knocks on the door of her room. She greets him and, far from showing either surprise or happiness at seeing him after he had just told her the previous night that it was going to be their last, just takes his hand, as she has always done, and leads him to the sofa where they have been accustomed to sitting together. It is as if she had already known he would come.

"He recalls that the previous night, when he told her he would not be able to come again, she had not betrayed any sorrow at parting

but had said, quite calmly, 'Oh, is that so?' Maybe this already suggested that she knew all along that he was destined to come back. That memory frightened him for some reason and, thinking he should dash out of the room, he was about to rise when immediately she grabbed his hand and threw her heavy body onto his lap.

"The woman's body is so hot that it is like a fire. He feels the heat directly with his hand she has clasped, and besides, within less than a minute, his heart starts to pound painfully, and he feels as if all his body heat is steadily being sucked away by her. At that moment, she looks intently into his face with her large, deep, dark pupils, and says in a calm voice, 'So you are not coming back after tonight?'. But he no longer has any energy left to respond.

"The eyes fixed on him seemed to express fierce and powerful emotions . . . as if to say, 'you may struggle to run away from me, but once I have marked you, I will never let you go.' He felt a shudder run through his whole body. And he could not help becoming aware of a sense of hopeless resignation welling up from the bottom of his heart, the feeling that there was nothing he could do, that he was this woman's prey—just like a mouse facing a cat, or a lamb transfixed in front of a wolf.

"Pity him! Mantéro had been so self-confident because he was a man, the master who had loved and flirted with her as if she were a docile domestic pet, but in time, consciously or unconsciously, he had come under the invisible power that enveloped her body and could never free himself from it. The story may sound familiar to you. For instance, in an old Persian or Turkish legend, the story is often told of an animal that is so infatuated with a young, beautiful queen that it kills her. Maybe this French gentleman too had become the object of infatuation of a Negro girl who had more animal than human blood.

"He became thinner and thinner, with only his eyes glaring; and the more desperately he struggled to get away from her, the closer he was drawn to her. It was, I think, about a year later that he fell gravely

ill and so, in order to avoid the cold winter of the United States, he first returned to France and then proceeded to the warmer climate of Italy. But there he became sick from the febrile disease that is often brought with the southern winds. As he was so debilitated, it was more than he could bear, and he ended his life there."

S— finished his story, smiled at me, and continued, "What do you think? Mantéro died doing what he wanted to do, just like a warrior dying in war, so I applaud him even as I am saddened.

"It's getting late. Let's emulate his example tonight and savor as much tasty meat and tasty wine as the nerves of our tongues can take. If we are happy, so will be the God who created us. Which restaurant shall we choose? Come, let's be on our way."

S— stood up from the bench where he had been sitting a long time. I followed him, and we both went down the wide stairway step by step, underneath several large nude statues.

In the coolness of the summer night, countless couples were in the plaza, near the pond, and under the trees. The nightless city glittered with lights and stood amid the uproar created by every kind of music and joyous voices. (The end.)



## Long Hair

Unlike in the countryside, where the coming of spring is heralded by blooming flowers and singing birds, in New York, which is made of stone, iron, bricks, and asphalt, one knows that spring is not far away by the latest models of women's hats being displayed inside the glass windows of the millineries.

As the windy month of March passes and April comes with its occasional afternoon showers, Easter Sunday is the customary day to change to spring clothes so that even if the weather is unpredictable and the day may be too cold, women of New York who have been impatiently waiting hastily discard their ornate winter garments and ride in carriages and cars in high spirits, fluttering the skirts of their chic thin garments.

I am one of those who love the fashions of this country, so rich in their variety of colors, so I decide to take advantage of the fine weather one day in order to watch the crowds of people. Around three o'clock in the afternoon, I take up a slender cane and walk, all alone, from Fifth Avenue to the tree-lined paths of Central Park. The sight of numerous carriages and cars, one after another, moving slowly in the serene spring sunlight is like Paris's Bois de Boulogne in the afternoon, which I have seen in pictures.

Onlookers of this grand spectacle are sitting on rows of benches on both sides of the tree-lined street, and I soon find a seat for myself.

James must not be wrong. A visit to this store is almost a duty for any traveler who passes through Chicago. It sells all kinds of daily goods such as clothes, furniture, notions, shoes, and cosmetics, and stands like a castle at one corner of State Street, which is the main street of this city. I slipped through the crowd and took the elevator to the top of the building, which is close to twenty stories high, and looked down, leaning against the well-polished brass railing.

The building is just like a huge tube with a hollow center, enabling the sunlight that enters through the glass ceiling at the top to reach all the way down, so that it is possible to enjoy the rare view of people walking in and out of the bottom, stone floor several hundred feet below! Men and women are hardly as big as our thumbs, and they worm their way through, moving their arms and legs; are there more comical playthings than these? But realizing that the same small and helpless-looking people had been able to build this tall, large building that reached the clouds, I could not help feeling proud of the glory of human development, even though I had but a short while earlier cursed civilization.

People will laugh at the frivolity of my undecided mind. But it simply means that the human mind changes and floats always and endlessly according to circumstances and surroundings. For instance, it is just like our hoping for the cold weather of winter on a summer day and longing for the warmth of summer on a winter day; there is no absolute truth, whether in Luther's Protestantism, Rousseau's liberty, or Tolstoy's peace. These are all voices called forth by circumstance.

James said he had to go to work, so we went down together by elevator and parted company at the store's entrance. As for myself, I intended to go to the Art Institute on Michigan Avenue.

(March 1905, Michigan)



## The Sea in Summer

I am staying at the residence of my elder cousin Sosen, which is seven or eight miles away from the poor quarters of the East Side, where people sometimes die as a result of the scorching heat; though it is still within the city limits of New York its uptown location is very quiet, and from its fifth-floor windows you can see, in the west, the upper reaches of the Hudson River, and in the east, the deep woods of Columbia University. On the other hand, the heat searing into the paving stones and bricks turns all the rooms into hothouses even before people wake up, and as sweat oozes from all over our bodies like oil, we have no appetite at the breakfast table and don't even want to finish our bowls of oatmeal.

As it is a Sunday, Sosen proposes to show me around and take me to New Jersey's Asbury Park, a bathing beach that is something like Zushi or Ōiso [on the outskirts of Tokyo].

We left home at once, rode the subway for just thirty minutes or so, from the northern to the southern end of the city, climbed up the stone steps of the station, walked through the downtown streets of New York where the tallest buildings stand, that is, the quintessential New York, and reached the south pier. There were people everywhere, on the decks of the steamship moored alongside the pier, at the ticket booth, in the park in front of the pier; even Americans are said to marvel at

the number of people everywhere in the city when they first come to New York, so for someone faint-hearted like me, it was discouraging, and "we won't be able to get on" was my natural response. But Sosen, who has long been accustomed to this sort of crazy scene and is what you call "smart," wasn't the least fazed and, taking my hand, forced himself into the crowd and somehow found a path for us to climb up to the deck of the steamship and even to sit down on folding chairs he found somewhere.

The ship unmoored in about five minutes, and by the time the dresses of women going back and forth on the pier began to look like flowers in a garden, a grand view of the Hudson's estuary was totally spread out before us. I believe there must be few scenes as grand as this. At the center are the tall buildings of New York rising high in the brilliant summer sky, at the right [sic] the cities of New Jersey with their smoke trailing out like clouds, and on the left [sic] the great Brooklyn Bridge, under which freely pass numerous steamships coming from the world's harbors, then the town of Brooklyn. A most amazing battleground of peace. And the Statue of Liberty gazes down on it in one sweep, raising a spear [sic] with one hand and soaring high above the sea far away from the harbor.

I have never seen a bronze statue of such dignity. Unconsciously, I felt an urge to kneel down at her feet and pray, and though at first I wondered if I had inherited some sort of idol-worshipping instinct from my ancestors, I came to the realization that this profound emotion was induced by the impeccable choice of the statue's location, which is the first principle of constructing statues. With any work of art, it is impossible to maximize its effect if the so-called accessories are neglected, and I think this is particularly true of statues and monuments. Nobody who, traveling on a tiny leaflike boat, comes within a distant view of the great city of the democratic nation and looks up at this enormous statue rising above the Atlantic Ocean will fail to be moved by a certain emotion. This statue is a representative of the new

continent, an exponent of the new ideology, and at the same time, a protector of the American spirit that is far more formidable than a million fortresses. I have heard that this statue was a gift from France, but I think the power of the artist who created it is equal to God's.

Perhaps in Japan too some may be making plans for the construction of a huge monument, representing the Orient in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war. But if it is going to be carried out by the Japanese government, a government that equates artistic work with the building of roads, I must hope such a plan won't materialize. Japan's beauty is known and loved throughout the world not through the statues of Kusunoki Masashige [a fourteenth-century warrior] or Saigō Takamori [a nineteenth-century figure], not through the brick buildings in Hibiya [in Tokyo], but through cherry blossoms scattering like clouds or geisha dancing like butterflies. So our mission as Orientals is not to be drunk with the dreamlike illusion of harmonizing East and West, as someone suggests, but to turn the whole island nation into a pleasure center of the world, with all our men devoting themselves to growing flowers and all our women becoming dancing girls.

The steamship carrying me sailed away into the vast open sea, rendering the beach scenes unrecognizable, but then it shifted course and moved along the quiet coastline. The summer's bright sunlight permeates the clear blue sky and shines upon the pure white peaks of the clouds floating over the horizon, the smooth sea, and the trees along the waterfront with branches thick with leaves, adding indescribably pleasant luster to the white of the clouds, the deep blue of the water, and the green of the leaves. As we look around, the coastal area is a stretch of low-lying ground like a meadow, and the surface of the water is often interrupted by sandbanks with tall, overgrown reeds, behind which immaculately white sails of yachts glide past, while a flock of seagulls fly like scattering blossoms. What a joy it is to stumble upon such a small-scale landscape, just like a watercolor painting,

in an unfamiliar place; it exceeds anything one encounters in world-renowned tourist spots or historical landmarks.

Last year, when I passed through the Rocky Mountains and Niagara Falls, I was not as moved by these world-famous sites as I had expected, while by contrast, I was unforgettably touched, poetically inspired by a Missouri village buried under fallen leaves or by a Michigan orchard's twilight—these celebrated mountains and majestic waters, gathering together nature's engineering, have long marveled and awed people, and may be likened to Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Dante's *Divine Comedy*, while the twilight scenes at those obscure villages are just like poems of unrequited love by an unknown poet. It is said that Tolstoy was more moved by the evening singing of *muzhiks* [serfs] than by Beethoven's music, that George Eliot preferred a little Dutch painting to the famous masterpieces of antiquity; so it might not be totally because of my lack of learning that I find small pieces by Turgenev or Maupassant more interesting than the grand epics of the classical period that have become trifling objects of experts and scholars.

After making two or three stops at piers of smaller beaches, the steamship arrived at a similar summer resort called Pleasant Bay. The lowland in the whole beach area had been made into a park, in which there were small music halls, restaurants, and rolling-ball parlors amid trees. From here it takes a little over one hour by train to reach our destination, Asbury Park, and all along the way is an uninterrupted stretch of summer hotels, summer rentals, and meadows with cool-looking clumps of trees.

Young sisters stretch themselves out on a hammock hung from maple trees in their little garden and are reading novels; a young couple sits in armchairs placed side by side on a veranda overhung with vivid green leaves, chatting happily to each other while looking out on the street; young lovers are returning home along the iron-fenced

road with flowers they have picked in the meadow; clusters of young girls are holding each other's hands, running around, singing songs; several groups of good-looking boys are visiting their friend at the front door across from the flower garden; and everywhere there are pleasant laughter, voices, whistling, and the sound of piano-playing.

Indeed, on such a clear, bright summer day, and with such an agreeable sea breeze, this village by the water is no hiding place for old folk disillusioned with life but a paradise for young men and women to indulge in the pleasures of youth, the idleness of youth, and the dreams of youth.

From the moving train, I saw countless beautiful women and handsome men. Nothing makes me feel more attached to this world and makes me enjoy my own existence more than seeing beautiful women and handsome men. Just as an innocent young girl does not know, not being a scientist, if the beautiful flowers blooming in the fields are poisonous or not, so do I feel, not being a moralist or a policeman and thus incapable of judging what may lie hidden underneath the human body, be it good or evil, that every place where handsome men and beautiful women tread, laugh, and enjoy themselves is like an ideal heaven. This is the more the case because this seaside in summer is less like a heated room in a wintry city, such as a theater or a dance hall where dresses and jewels are blooming, than a village where the fragrance of thinly clad snowy bodies are filling the air.

Men are wearing light jackets and straw hats, while women don't even wear hats underneath their white parasols and walk in the bright sun like so many birds flying in the sky, proudly showing off their curly blond or brunette hair, displaying, from the hems of their short skirts, wrinkle-free silk stockings and charming small shoes, rolling up the sleeves of their thin waists [shirtwaists], which are almost transparent, swinging their hips, and beating time with their shoulders.

I am the first to admit to admiring the physical beauty of Western women, the first to love everything from their most curvaceous waistlines, expressive eyes, statuelike smooth shoulders, and broad chests to their feet encased in small high-heeled shoes, and to pay the highest respects to their ingenuity in make-up and their swiftness in adapting to fashion. They skillfully choose the color and shape of their clothes to match the color of their hair, facial features, and build so that even an average-looking woman is enhanced to attract men's attention, while in Japan, men and women seem totally deficient of this ability. It may be that the Japanese are a people accustomed to censure and meddling so that women brought up in that society are too timid and intimidated to be capable of enhancing their natural appearances.

The train stopped at an intersection in a town overlooking the Asbury Park beach.

The verandas of four or five tall wooden hotels facing the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, the drugstore at a corner of the intersection, the esplanade jutting out over the waves are all filled with men and women, their white clothes and parasols reflecting the blue color of the sky and the sea and producing in onlookers an indescribably pleasurable sensation.

Sosen and I go down the steps of the esplanade to the sand by the sea and look around for a place that might rent out a swimsuit so I may immerse my five-*shaku* [five-foot] body, which was raised under the Far Eastern sun, for the first time in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean,\* but strangely enough, there is not one person swimming, though so many people are strolling along the sea, and no place is open for changing clothes.

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\*The part of the sentence from "so I may" to "Atlantic Ocean" was omitted in later editions. In reality, the author was a very tall person for a Japanese.

"I don't understand it, the sea isn't that rough," I say, and Sosen too looks around inquiringly; but then he remembers and says, "It's because today is Sunday."

There are places in the United States that forbid any kind of amusement on a Sunday for religious reasons. Asbury Park is one of them.

A prohibition! Regulations! Nothing looks more foolish than formal rules promulgated by religion. Do they really think there is sufficient religious significance in going to church on Sunday, singing hymns, and praying? Are these enough to help solve life's riddles?\*

Sosen told me that there are certain towns in this state with a ludicrous contradiction, which forbids all amusement on Sundays but allows the driving of carriages and automobiles.

The two of us sat on the sand and spent a little time gazing at the infinite ocean where only clouds floated, and after a while we returned to the esplanade; after quenching our thirst with a glass of lemonade, we decided to go back to Pleasant Bay Park where we had disembarked and take a nap till the return boat was due, and jumped onto the approaching train.

After getting off at the entrance to the park, we walked to a shady spot under the trees at the edge of the water and sat on the soft green grass. The scenery before our eyes reminded me of nothing as much as a peaceful Dutch painting, with roofs and windmills of farmhouses peeking out from among the low stretch of summer trees, across the calm inlet that reflects the shadows of white summer clouds.

I somehow felt inexplicably happy and, lounging on the grass, I took out a cigarette from my pocket and had a smoke; when I looked

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\*\*This paragraph was omitted in later editions.

toward the quiet surface of the water, there was a pure white boat in the middle of the lake-like inlet, which had made its appearance I knew not when. It looked like Lohengrin's white swan, which alighted unexpectedly from midair. But there seemed to be only two people aboard, a young woman and a young man, the latter rowing with all his might so that the boat swiftly moved away and in no time disappeared behind the sand bank where reeds protruded. Simultaneously, I too threw myself back flat on the grass as if I were lying down on my bed; my eyes were then at the same level as the surface of the water, and it felt as though the brimming sea were in no time going to soak me, while the summer sky glimpsed behind the green maple leaves seemed even higher and wider than usual, in sharp contrast to the floating white clouds, which appeared to be slowly descending to envelope me. With what joy did I wait for it to happen, with what should I compare the sensation of being surrounded by a haziness as if hidden in a mist, with only a breeze occasionally coming this way over the surface of the water, gently lapping my face, so that my entire body, all its bones and flesh, melted into vapor, leaving only the fragile skin that was like silk and sensitive to everything, enabling me to float between the full-bodied water and the languid clouds, more lightly than fish or birds . . . ah, what a daydream!

When I was back home, I used to think nothing was as refined as an afternoon nap on a summer day in a small room overlooking a small garden where safflowers blossomed, while listening to the sound of a wind bell outside the reed screen; or at a geisha house by the river where the sound of *samisen* could be heard far away; but away from home, I find that it is an even more charming and simply indescribable experience to lie down on the luxuriant wild grass under the immense sky of this foreign land.

When I was living in a remote rural community in Michigan, it was exactly at the end of May, in the middle of spring in this northern

country, that fresh leaves of huge maple, elm, and oak trees thickly enveloped the village; apple, peach, and cherry blossoms bloomed in the orchards climbing up the hill, as did purple lilacs, white snowballs, and red roses in the tiny yards of people's houses. Robins and blackbirds that leave the south and flock to this place in spring and summer keep singing carefree songs at the top of their lungs, in yards, cemeteries, towns, villages, wherever trees and flowers are blooming. It continues to be sunny during the day, as is often the case on a continent, and the strong sunlight reminds one of the July heat in Japan. I decide to take a break from my small room and walk along the train tracks amid the small hills rising from the edge of the village and gradually wander into the uninhabited oak woods. As I fling myself onto the wild grass resplendent with white daisies and golden buttercups, numerous squirrels, startled by the sound, scuttle in all directions on the grass and, promptly jumping from one oak treetop to another, begin to squeak.

As usual, I brought a collection of poems in my pocket, but before mysterious nature, any painting, any poem seems but a grotesque exaggeration, at times even a total falsehood, and I no longer desire to touch any such artificial object. Rather, I stretch myself out to my heart's content, and as I look at the sky beyond the tall treetops, smell the scent of moist soil and grass, and listen intently to the singing of birds or the squeaking of squirrels, I feel as if I had completely renounced the world, or been renounced by it. In Japan, where even in remote mountainous villages land is almost everywhere cultivated, one feels the din and bustle of the world, but, as can be expected, in the vast American continent, everywhere there is such an uninhabited area just two miles outside a town; in addition, my own subjective sentiment of solitude in a foreign land gives me an inexplicable sense of pathos and beauty as I watch the luxuriant foliage, the flowing water, and the clouds sailing across the sky, and wild fantasies well up in my mind, imagining, in view of the chilly pleasures of a wandering

life, how it would be if I rode a camel in the desert side by side with an Arabian woman and slept with her under a tent, or, in contrast, if I fell ill on my journey and became bedridden in a back alley where the sun never shone. . . . At this I shudder in spite of myself and wonder if I should not go back to Japan tomorrow; I am driven from one extreme thought to another and eventually fall into a confused dream, emotionally exhausted.

Oh! Daydreaming in a foreign land! It was these dreams that gave my monotonous life an unlimited charm I had never experienced. Today, as usual, I lay down by Pleasant Bay, into which the tides of the Atlantic Ocean flow, and heard in my dream the sound of some exquisite music; I then awoke with a start and realized that at the restaurant at the end of the park, a band was beginning to play some quiet classical piece.

But I was still in a state of torpor after my nap and casually fixed my gaze upon the scenery in front of me, from the bay to the woods and the clouds, as if viewing a place I had visited more than ten years earlier; then, hearing footsteps behind me, I turned around and found Sosen. He told me that he too had just awakened and had been to the pier to check the schedule for our return trip.

The two of us left the shaded area and, after stopping at the park restaurant where music was playing to quench our thirst with chilled fruit and ginger ale, we boarded the ship past five o'clock in the evening.

The sun set in the west while we were on board, enabling us to enjoy thoroughly the view of the Atlantic Ocean aglow, and by the time we slowly approached New York harbor, we noticed a bright light starting to shine in the hand held high by the Statue of Liberty. This was followed by the glittering, all at once, far away beyond the high-heaving afternoon waves, of New York's buildings reaching the sky like a mountain range, the numerous ships moored by the

Brooklyn Bridge, and the row of piers; this scene was even more beautiful and seemed even more full of meaning than what we had seen in daytime.

It was exactly eight o'clock when the steamship reached the pier; Sosen and I went to Fourteenth Street, which is particularly alive at night, to eat our dinner and entered a certain French café.

(July 1905)