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Celebrating 175: Eastman Johnson, Letter to Charlotte [Child], March 25, 1851

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home, before I knew that they were unrivalled by any other, and that the sad sweet charm that always rests upon them in all their gayness of attire is perhaps peculiarly their own.

This comes from the "ledge" - that old familiar name, "up on the ledge", where we have strolled in summer and slid downhill in winter - Here the trees go gradually into the sere and yellow leaf and whither away into brownness without putting on the bright hectic that foretells their decay with us as they perish into winter - This is owing to the want of the sudden frost which we have that nips the leaves while they are full of sap - Altho. so much farther north the winters here are much milder, but very little snow and ice, the past, scarcely none. But the summers also much colder indeed the last one seemed to me no summer at all, tho. it was to be sure unusual for this region - It is suited apparently for grapes and wine which flows most bountifully from all southern hill sides and sunny slopes and vallies - They were beginning the vintage while I was on my journey. The vineyards all about me were laden with the ripe fruit and without fences or hedges to prevent the freest access -

The peasantry were all at work, men and women, and it was my habit to give each party a call. Now and then a pretty girl would emerge from the vines with her tub of grapes on her head and I would help her to plunge them into the great cask that always stood by the roadside. for the bruising of them, which was an excellent commencement to a nice little rustic flirtation, and then she would gather me some particularly nice bunches and I would tell her what an odd thing it seemed to me. To see such a pretty girl working in the fields and how nice and lazy she could live where I come from in America, where all the girls do nothing but grow fat and get married and have black slaves to wait upon them, which she could scarcely believe, tho. she had heard America was a paradise - But the fair eyed lovely maids generally associated with vineyards in poetry, I am pretty well convinced is a fiction entirely, at least in Germany, for they are for the most part less fascinating than the cows yoked to their carts and ploughs. Constant labour in the field, and bearing heavy burdens on the head must always have the effect, to render them stupid, ungraceful, and unfeminine. In the cultivation of the grape especially the labour is often excessively hard. The finest grows on the banks of the Rhine where the course of the river for a great way admits on one side of a southern aspect, rising abruptly and often to a great height the favourable quality and position of the soil is too precious to be lost and every inch is tended and improved with the greatest care.

Here the women and the girls may be seen descending the steep and rocky declivity where it looks almost impossible to climb, with a brimming tub balanced on their heads, as severe a labour as could possibly be. Also great quantity of earth is carried up to add to the depth of soil in some sunny crevice. You have read I dare say many tours upon the Rhine, and it is not at all worthwhile for me to give you a journal of mine. I saw all its castles and ruins, sketched many and enjoyed rambles among them, ancient monuments of another time and another people to the very fullest degree. I spent five or six days at Heidelberg where is the most magnificent of them all. While crouched at work on my sketching stool one day three Bostonians whom I had met at home accosted me, one, the son of Dana the poet, the only Americans I met during my absence. We talked over America from one end to the other - Directly in the vicinity of Dusseldorf are none of the attractions in point of scenery peculiar to the Rhine above here. On the

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